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INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

1

1944

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LENIN AND LITERATURE

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the great Soviet leader and outstanding scientist, believed in a science which, to quote Stalin, "has the courage and determination to discard old traditions, standards and principles when they become obsolete and impede progress, and which is able to create new traditions, new standards and new principles."¹ Lenin also introduced new traditions, standards and principles in the study of literature; in many of its important aspects, Leninism, the doctrine he propounded, had direct bearing upon the history and theory of literature.

Lenin not only laid down general principles of literary criticism but himself provided some classical examples. His remarks on the works of Herzen and Byelinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Turgenyev, Nekrassov and Gleb Uspensky, Leo Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky, are invaluable in order to obtain an understanding of these and other writers, and for further research on their work and activity. Lenin's critical writings may be considered as models of dialectical materialism consistently applied in the field of literature. As an example we may quote his essays on Tolstoy (*Leo Tolstoy as a Mirror of the Russian Revolution*, *L. N. Tolstoy*, *L. N. Tolstoy and the Contemporary Labour Movement*, *Tolstoy and the Struggle of the Proletariat*, and *L. N. Tolstoy and His Age*), which directed the study of the works and philosophy of this great Russian writer into totally new channels.

Lenin's teaching as a whole and his literary criticism in particular set new and higher standards in Russia and other countries for the study of literature. It was Lenin who blazed the trail for Soviet art and literature and helped to a proper

understanding of the cultural values of the past.

In her *Reminiscences of Lenin*, his wife Nadyezhda Krupskaya describes how highly he rated the classics of literature:

"The comrade who first introduced me to Vladimir Ilyich told me he was a very erudite man; that he read learned books exclusively, had never read a novel in his life and never read poetry. I was astounded. . . .

"Later, when we worked together and I came to know Ilyich more intimately, I noticed what a keen observer of life and people he was; and Lenin in the flesh was a complete contradiction to the picture I had formed, the picture of a man who had never read a book that told how people live.

"But life at that time was such that there never seemed to be an opportunity to discuss this theme. It was not until we were in Siberia that I discovered Ilyich had read the classics no less than I; Turgenyev, for instance, he had reread more than once. I took the works of Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrassov to Siberia with me; Vladimir Ilyich placed them by his bedside along with Hegel; he read them in the evenings, over and over again. Pushkin he liked best of all; but he not only valued good style. For example, he liked Chernyshevsky's novel, *What Is to Be Done?* despite its lack of literary polish and its naive plot. I was surprised to see how attentively he read that book and how he took note of all the very fine nuances to be found in it.

"It may be stated here that he was altogether very fond of Chernyshevsky. He had two post card portraits of this writer in his Siberian album. One of them bore the year of his birth and that of his death in Lenin's handwriting. Among the foreign portraits was one of Emile Zola; among the Russian Herzen

¹ J. Stalin, Speech delivered to the Universities' workers in the Kremlin, May 17, 1938.

and Pissarev. Lenin liked the latter immensely and read him much.

"In Siberia we also had Goethe's *Faust* in German and a small volume of Heine's poems."

In his own writings Lenin drew readily on the Russian classics—Griboyedov and Gogol, Goncharov and Chekhov, Chernyshevsky and Saltykov-Shchedrin, using their characters to lampoon his own political opponents.

Thus, for instance, Lenin picks out "that Cadet, Judas Golovlev," a clearly delineated character, created by the famous satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin and understood by every Russian, to vivify his description of the treacherous policy of the Cadets (current abbreviation of Constitutional Democrats) who strove to deceive the people into believing that they were real democrats and thus distract them from their struggle for liberation. Derogatory types from the works of Russian writers assist Lenin to depict the political features of the enemies of the Russian people ("Black-Hundred Sobakevich," "Cadet Manilov," "the otherwise Narodniks gudgeons," etc.).

Everything Lenin said about literature points to the important place he accorded it as a factor in social progress and as a mighty weapon in the social struggle. But in order to discharge its historic mission, Lenin maintained, literature must be a true mirror of reality and must champion the progressive ideas of its time. The artist must be a conscious fighter for the interests of the people; and the writers that Lenin most keenly appreciated were those whose work breathed a spirit of kinship with the oppressed people. Lenin always fought against formalistic, extravagant literature that distorted the realities and was incomprehensible to the people at large. He required of literature that it should be truthful and realistic, should have its roots in the life of the people and should rouse them to fight.

Lenin's views on literature for the liberated peoples was generalized by the genius of Stalin's conception of socialist realism; the style of the new, free literature openly espouses the interests of the people, the millions. The literature of socialist realism is a veracious literature, impregnated with advanced social views and expresses the active

creative content of the lives of the peoples in our country.

"If it is a really great artist that stands before us," Lenin wrote in one of his essays on Tolstoy, "his works are bound to reflect at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution."

Tolstoy did not understand the Revolution, he definitely drew back from it; yet Lenin called him "a mirror of the Russian Revolution." What makes Tolstoy such a great writer is that in his novels he gave a true reflection of certain essential aspects of the Russian Revolution and consequently of some of the major social developments of his time. Lenin's main criterion of the value of real art was the truth and depth with which it reflected real life.

Many students of literature undervalued the tremendous cognitional importance of classic literature; these people tended to treat the literary writings of the past as nothing but the expression of aspirations and yearnings, as a welter of fallacies and frustrations. But the tremendous role of literature as a means to acquire a knowledge of life was neglected. Lenin, on the other hand, consistently looked for positive, ideological and cognitional implications in literature and art, for it is they that constitute their value and greatness.

Practically every time Lenin has occasion to discuss literary subjects he touches on the degree of the writer's faithfulness and depth when portraying the life and ideas of the epoch in which he lived. Thus, in one of his earliest works, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin speaks of the seclusion of the Urals and their isolation from the centre of Russia, and mentions the method of floating goods down the rivers as the chief means of transporting them to Moscow. And appended to this passage is the following interesting note:

"Compare the description of this system with that given in Mamin-Sibiryak's story, *The Rapids*. This writer graphically reproduces life in the Urals with its peculiarities unaltered by the Reforms¹, the population tied down to the factories, disfranchised, ignorant and

¹ In the sixties of the past century a number of reform measures were carried out in Russia; primarily the abolition of serfdom and the introduction of a new judicial system,—Ed.

down-trodden; the masters indulging in naive, ingenuous dissipation, and lacking that middle class (commoners, intellectuals) so characteristic of capitalist development in all countries, Russia included."

Speaking elsewhere in this book of the lowly life of the Russian peasant, Lenin quotes Saltykov-Shchedrin, Veressayev and Gleb Uspensky and uses their truthful descriptions of the peasant's hopeless position under the tsar to illustrate his point.

Lenin sees human knowledge as a reflection of actual reality. Scientific concepts and artistic forms are casts of the phenomena of the outer world, the results of various forms of the knowledge of nature and human society. But the very process of knowledge, cognition, is not merely a dead, mirrored direct reflection, but bears a contradictory character. Human cognition is not limited to the moment of perception but continues through sensation and thought, and is tested by practice. The reflection of nature and human society in literature means the creation of artistic figures, that is to say, pictures of reality, passed through the creative individuality of the artist and bearing within themselves traces of his ideological views and feelings. The following tenet propounded by Lenin fully explains the cognition of reality in art and literature: "Knowledge is the reflection of nature by man. But this is not simple, not direct, not integral reflection but a process of a number of abstractions, the formulation of concepts, laws. . ."¹

The philosophical basis of this view on the cognitive of significance of literature and art is Lenin's theory of reflection.

The supreme law of creative genius of Goethe, Balzac and Tolstoy was the truth of life. Goethe's mental duality sprang from the specific conditions prevailing in the backward, fragmented Germany of the eighteenth century; it was a product of the specific features of the "German Revolution." The glaring contradictions in Tolstoy's philosophy expressed the contradictions that marked the life of Russia during the last third of the nineteenth century.

If there is one thing that follows more

than another from Lenin's conception of artistic values, it is that the artist is entitled to approach a subject only when he himself has mastered it in all its aspects.

All art which tried to varnish, to distort the truth was repugnant to Lenin. With his passionate love of living he consistently opposed every attempt to conceal life's verities.

A very interesting statement was made by Lenin in the course of a conversation with Clare Sheridan, the English sculptress, then working on a bust of him. She had shown Lenin photographs of some specimens of her work, including a photograph of "Victory."

Lenin said that he did not like "Victory"; she had made it too pretty, he remarked. Militarism and war, he went on, are hideous and revolting, and neither heroism nor self-sacrifice can change that. That is the trouble with bourgeois art, he added. It always embellishes.

Nadezhda K. Krupskaya also remarks how sensitive Lenin was to the ring of any false note in literature:

"Two days before his death I read to him in the evening a tale by Jack London, *Love of Life*—it is still lying on a table in his room. It was a very gripping story. In a wilderness of ice, where no human being had set foot, a sick man, dying of hunger, is making for the harbour of a big river. His strength is giving out, he cannot walk and keeps on sliding, beside him there slides a wolf—also dying of hunger. There is a fight between them; the man wins. Half dead, half demented, he reaches his goal.

"That tale greatly pleased Ilyich. Next day he asked me to read him more of Jack London. But amongst London's works are to be found extraordinarily weak ones. The next tale happened to be of quite another type—saturated with false morale. Some captain promises the owner of a ship laden with corn to dispose of the cargo at a good price: he sacrifices his life merely in order to keep his word. Ilyich smiled and dismissed it with a deprecating wave of his hand."

Lenin's tastes in literature were not confined to the realism, in the narrow sense of the term. He was no less fond of the romantic if it was a romanticism that expressed man's striving for liberty for a better future. While in Paris Lenin spent many an hour reading Victor

¹ Lenin, *Miscellany*, vol. IX, p. 185 (Russ. ed.).



LENIN IN PETROGRAD

Drawn by P. Vassilyev

Hugo's *Châtiments*, his poems of the Revolution of 1848. Nadezhda K. Krupskaya also relates that he would sometimes while away sleepless nights with a volume of Verhaeren.

Lenin always treated revolutionary vision, imagination, as vital to man's work. "We must be visionaries too," he said.

Without imagination no science can develop. "It is a faculty of the utmost value," said Lenin. "The idea that poets are the only people who must possess it is quite mistaken. That's a foolish prejudice. Imagination is necessary even in mathematics. Differential and integral calculus could not have been invented without it."

But Lenin always distinguished between fruitful visions, the romanticism that made for effort and progress, and "empty visions," reactionary romanticism. Lenin, who combined the "Russian revolutionary sweep" with "American efficiency," had no use for "empty visions." Visions have a value only if they help man in his struggle.

Man's brain does not merely reflect the world outside; it is a mighty factor in changing it; and Lenin brings out this active, creative aspect of human knowledge.

Literature can be properly understood only if the writer is regarded as a social being and his work as influenced by a public interest. True literature has never engaged merely in registering indifferently the realities of the outside world.

The writer is a living being rooted in the society of his time and a passive mechanical reproduction of life is not literature. There is an inseparable nexus between the literary profession and social development and history which Lenin illustrated by citing the activities of the leading Russian litterateurs: Herzen and Byelinsky, Chernyshevsky, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Leo Tolstoy—all of them ardent fighters in the social battle.

The paramount criterion of a writer's merit is the contribution he makes to social and artistic development; and Lenin, in giving his opinion of a man of letters, invariably spoke of the part he played in the progress of society. He spoke outright of the benefit or injury a writer's work held for the people. In a letter to Gorky he wrote: "By your talent as an artist you have brought such enormous

benefit to the labour movement of Russia—and not of Russia alone—and you will bring it so much benefit in the future that in no event must you allow yourself to succumb to oppressive moods. . . ." The high opinion Lenin had of Gorky the artist went hand in hand with the great value he placed on Gorky's work as a stimulant to the progress of mankind.

"It's a book we need," he said to Gorky of his *Mother*: "many of the workers have been taking part in the revolutionary movement impulsively, without a real understanding of the issues and it will do them a lot of good to read *Mother*."

Writing to Serafimovich in 1920, Lenin said: "Your writings, and what my sister (Maria I. Ulyanova.—*Ed.*) tells me, have aroused my warmest sympathies and I should like to tell you how much the workers and all of us need your work."

Gorky tells us that Lenin was very proud of Russian art, proud that it could boast of men like Tolstoy.

"Once I came to him and saw *War and Peace* lying on a table," he says. "Smiling, his eyes wrinkled at the corners, he stretched himself deliciously in his armchair, and, lowering his voice, added quickly: 'What a colossus, eh? What a man! There's an artist for you! . . . And do you know what is still more amazing? His muzhik voice and thought, the personification of a real muzhik in him. You couldn't find a genuine muzhik in literature until this count came on the scene.' Then, screwing up his eyes and looking at me, he asked: 'Can you place anyone in Europe beside him?' and replied himself: 'No one.' Then, rubbing his hands, he laughed contentedly."

Lenin's observations on Russian writers and his views of Russian history furnished quite a new conception of the principal stages in the development of Russian literature, which they weave into a continuous whole.

In Lenin's eyes many of the great Russian writers—Radishchev and Herzen, Byelinsky and Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky and Maxim Gorky—figured not only in the history of literature: they could not be omitted from the history of Russia.

Conditions in Russia in the 'forties and 'sixties of the last century were such

that literature was the only medium available for the dissemination of progressive ideas; and Russians like Herzen, Byelinsky and Chernyshevsky did in fact express in their works the foremost ideas of their day. From their writings Lenin culled much that was valuable; he brought out the social content of Russian literature and it was with good reason that he wrote of its "world significance."

Lenin's classification of the stages of the emancipation movement in Russia brings out in a totally new light the part played by Byelinsky as the forerunner of revolutionary democracy in social thought and literary criticism. Of Byelinsky's famous *Letter to Gogol*¹ Lenin wrote:

"This letter, which summed up Byelinsky's literary activities, was among the best of the writing that appeared in the uncensored democratic press and that have retained their tremendous living significance to this day."² In the impassioned message sent forth by the "infuriated Vissarion," as the great Russian critic was called by his friends, Lenin heard, re-echoed, the sentiments of the oppressed serf peasants ground down by their feudal lords and the autocracy. And quoting the works of other great Russian writers too, Lenin proved the kinship of progressive Russian classical literature with the people.

The existence of this organic bond linking progressive art with the people follows inevitably from Lenin's very conception of literature and art. It is not only that the people have a claim to art: they are the creators of it.

"Art belongs to the people," Lenin said in a statement quoted by Clara Zetkin in her *Reminiscences*. "Its deepest roots must be sought in the very thick of the popular masses. It must voice the feelings, the thoughts and the will of these masses, must uplift them. It must awaken the artists in the masses and serve to develop them," Lenin said, mapping out an integral program for the development of literature and art.

This point of the organic bond be-

tween "grand," progressive literature and the life of the people, their thoughts and aspirations, is made by Lenin with regard to the works of many of Russia's foremost authors.

Among contemporary foreign writers Lenin considered Upton Sinclair and Henri Barbusse as worthy of particular note. He was particularly emphatic in his praise of the latter for his truthful portrayal of the spiritual growth of the masses in the ordeal of the first World War and the awakening to consciousness of the civilian population.

Writing in 1919 in his *Reply to the Questions of an American Correspondent* Lenin spoke of the outstanding value of the works of Barbusse, who, he said, had been the most peaceable, placid, law-abiding of petty-bourgeois philistines when he went to the war, but who later, as we know, became a big writer, who associated himself with the progressive forces of the world. The same year Lenin wrote that in Barbusse's novels *Le Feu* and *Clarté* the awakening of the ignorant man-in-the-street is mirrored "with an extraordinary degree of forcefulness, talent and truth."

Gorky, that titan of contemporary Russian literature, was a close friend of Lenin and Stalin, both of whom held his work in highest esteem.

Nadezhda K. Krupskaya gives a vivid description of Lenin's friendship with Gorky:

"Lenin had a very high opinion of Alexei Maximovich Gorky as a writer. He particularly liked *Mother* and the articles in *Novaya Zhizn* about the townfolk—Lenin himself loathed everything that smacked of narrow-mindedness. He enjoyed *The Lower Depths* and the songs of the *Falcon* and the *Stormy Petrel*—he was fond of their rhythm. Other things of Gorky's that he greatly appreciated were *Bawdy Face*, and *Twenty-six Men and a Girl*.

"I remember how eager he was one day to go and see *The Lower Depths*, performed at the Art Theatre; I remember how he would listen to *My Universities* being read to him in the closing days of his life."

Gorky's most common subject was the workers, the poor of the town, the "lower depths," the sections of the people with whom Lenin was most

¹ Written on July 15 th, 1847, in reply to Gogol's reactionary, mystical pronouncements in his *Letters to My Friends* published the same year.

² V. I. Lenin, *From the History of Labour Press in Russia*, 1914.

concerned. He described life as it was, with all its actual facts and happenings: he saw it through the eyes of a man who hated oppression, exploitation, banality and mental poverty—the eyes of a revolutionary. And what Gorky wrote struck a kindred, responsive cord in Lenin's mind.

Lenin got to know Gorky more intimately in 1907 and these kindred spirits drew very close to each other. Of great interest are Lenin's letters to Gorky during the second emigration period. In them you see a very vivid picture of Lenin the man. He wrote to Gorky with abrupt directness of the things he disagreed with, the things that agitated and troubled him. That was his usual manner of writing to comrades, but in the letters to Gorky one detects a special note. Frequently he is quite severe. Yet his severity is heavily tinged with a particular gentleness. These letters are always written under the influence of some recent event. They are highly emotional—they are epistles voicing alarm or echoing sufferings endured; they speak of joys and of expectations. Lenin felt that

Gorky was the man who would understand. He was always anxious to convince Gorky of the rightness of his views and fought hard to maintain them.

Lenin's letters to Gorky are full of solicitude for him. Everybody knows how attentive Lenin was to the needs of people, how concerned he was about their welfare. Maxim Gorky himself often spoke of this. Everybody noticed it.

Gorky laid the foundation of socialist realism in literature. His works inaugurated a new era in the development of Russian art. None knew this better than Lenin and none brought out this fact more clearly than he. Embodied in Gorky's writings is the literature Lenin had in mind when he wrote:

"It will be a free literature, for it will not serve blasé ladies, nor the 'upper ten thousand,' bored and troubled with obesity, but the millions and tens of millions of working people, who are the flower of the country, the source of its strength, its future."¹

VLADIMIR SHCHERBINA

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. VIII, p. 390 (Russ. ed.).



"Our Vow—Revenge.
A poster by N. Zhukov and V. Klimashin

THE FASCIST RULERS SHALL NOT ESCAPE JUSTICE

Our people watched with tense attention the trial of the hitlerite executioners. It revealed a shocking picture of unprecedented crimes perpetrated with the monstrous aim of exterminating the peoples of the Land of the Soviets. The vile essence of nazism with its beastly racial theory was laid bare in all its ugliness. Even the devastation caused by the hordes of Jenghiz Khan pale before the systematic implementation of the plan for the extermination of civilians.

The victories of the Red Army, its irresistible advance to the West constitute a guarantee that just punishment will soon be meted out to the nazi government leaders, the inspirers of these monstrous crimes. The hour is nigh when the combined efforts of the great freedom-loving nations of the world will bring about the collapse of the revolting edifice of German fascism.

A. TVALCHRELIDZE,

Member of the Academy of Sciences

LET US HELP HASTEN THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY

The Kharkov trial has once again shown the real face of nazism to the peoples of the Soviet Union and to all mankind. Held in public, the trial laid bare the full picture of the crimes perpetrated by the nazist beasts on the temporarily occupied Soviet territories.

Reading the confessions of these automatons every Soviet citizen is filled with disgust and contempt. With dull German thoroughness they described in court the process of destruction of thousands of innocent people.

The Soviet court has revealed and exposed the shameful, dastardly crimes of hitlerite soldiers and officers, crimes before which the blackest obscurantism of medieval inquisition pales into nothingness.

8 The court which passed sentence on the

brown reptiles was speaking on behalf of the people. Every Soviet man, every honest citizen in any part of the world would have affixed his signature to this sentence, for every word of it is just from beginning to end. At the same time everyone understands and realizes that this is only the beginning of the reckoning.

In order that the moment of full punishment come as soon as possible, all intellectuals engaged in production and technology must exert themselves still further, dedicating all of their mental capacity, all their strength and knowledge to the service of the front. Every engineer, every Soviet patriot realizes that the greater, the more strenuous his effort, the nearer will be the desired hour of victory, the sooner will just punishment be meted out.

G. BERZHETS,

chief engineer in a factory

RECKONING

This is merely the beginning, the beginning of the great reckoning. All the murderers to a man will suffer severe punishment for their unprecedented crimes. The hitlerite monsters shall not escape justice. Justice will triumph!

These thoughts and feelings animate every honest man reading the sentence passed by the Soviet court on the German fascist villains.

With unwavering confidence in the triumph of reason the freedom-loving peoples wholeheartedly say today:

"The criminal nazist clique, cursed by the peoples of the world shall not escape responsibility. The hour of full reckoning is approaching!"

Academician A. N. KRYLOV,
Academician V. A. OBRUCHEV,
Academician P. L. KAPITZA,
Academician A. A. BOGOMOLETS,
President of the Academy of Sciences
of the Ukrainian SSR, Academician,
A. V. PALLADIN

GRIM HERALD

It was very hard to read the details of the hitlerite crimes revealed at the Kharkov trial. I could constantly see before my eyes these ghastly gas-cars—most ingenuous weapon of death, the product of a most beastly and savage mind.

The description of the inhuman sufferings, tortures and humiliation to which our Red Army men and civilians were subjected by the German inquisitionists will for long remain in the memory. It is impossible to recall without shuddering the children mercilessly exterminated by the Hitlerites.

We applaud the sentence passed on the murderers. We are looking towards the day when punishment will be suffered by all the others responsible for the bloody orgy in the Soviet cities and villages temporarily occupied by the Germans.

M. D. MIKHAILOV,
singer

A JUST DECISION

The sentence passed by the Military Tribunal on the German miscreants is just, and the only decision conceivable for a Soviet court. It reflects the feelings and desires that dominated our country during the days of the trial. We already knew much about the bloody crimes of the German-fascist invaders, but the revelations of the Kharkov trial went beyond anything previously heard or seen.

The fascist monsters must be mercilessly exterminated. There is no place for them in civilized society. The best place for them is the gallows. Mankind will only breathe freely when stern retribution has overtaken the last fascist bandit, child-murderer and barbarian.

N. Y. MYASKOVSKY,
composer

MEETING IN BERLIN

Many Government buildings have been destroyed and damaged by the English bombers over Berlin.



"Where are you off to, Göring???"

"I was just coming to you at the Foreign Office. And you, Ribbentrop?"

"And I and Goebbels were just coming to you at the Ministry of Aviation!!!"

Drawn by Boris Yefimov

MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV

THEY FOUGHT FOR THEIR COUNTRY

Chapters from the novel

All night long the huge fields of ripened grain, set on fire by German air bombs, burned and smouldered. All night long half the sky was shrouded in a crimson, incessantly flickering glow, and in this cruel glitter of war that lit up the steppe the translucent blue light of the waning moon seemed inordinately gentle and somehow quite unnecessary.

The fumes of burning were carried to the east by the wind, constantly pursuing the troops who were withdrawing to the Don, haunting them like a bad memory. And with every kilometre, Zvyagintsev's heart became heavier within him as if the acrid, poisoned air of the conflagration had settled not only in his lungs, but in his heart as well. . .

Along the road to the river-crossing marched the last units of the covering troops; carts of refugees loaded with household belongings stretched along the way; tanks thundered by on either side of the road, their tracks clanking and raising ashen clouds of dust, while flocks of collective farm sheep that were being hastily driven off to the Don scampered off into the steppe in a panic on catching sight of the tanks and disappeared into the night. And in the darkness the pattering of tiny sheep's hoofs could long be heard, while after they had died down, the plaintive voices of women and youngsters who were trying to stop and calm the panic stricken sheep still sounded for long.

While passing a motorized column that had halted on the road at one spot, Zvyagintsev picked an ear of grain that had escaped the fire at the edge of the field and raised it to his eyes. It was an ear of hard, fluted *Melanopus* wheat, bulging with heavy grain. Its black whiskers were singed and the jacket on the grain had burst open under the heated breath of the flames, the whole ear—disfigured by the heat and wretched looking—was thoroughly permeated with the pungent smell of smoke.

Zvyagintsev sniffed at the ear and murmured indistinctly:

"Poor dear, what a smoking you've had! You reek of smoke like a gypsy. . . That is what that damn German, may his soul petrify, has done to you!"

Tenderly he rolled the ear between his palms; removing the grains from their husks he poured the grain from hand to hand and blew away the chaff after which he poured the wheat into his mouth, careful not to lose a single grain. As he chewed he sighed three or four times, sadly and gustily.

In the course of the long months that he had spent at the front, Zvyagintsev had seen many deaths and much sorrow and suffering among the people; he had seen villages that had been ravaged and villages that had been burned to the ground, blown-up factories and shapeless mounds of brick and rubble in spots that had not long since been graced by towns; he had seen orchards levelled by tanks and mortally crippled by artillery fire. But in the whole course of the war, he for the first time this day saw ripe grain burning on the vast expanse of the steppe and his heart ached within him. He trudged on for a long time swallowing back involuntary sighs and looking around with dry eyes through the dusk of the night at the coalblack fields that had been set on fire by the enemy, occasionally picking an ear of wheat or barley that had miraculously escaped the flames here and there at the edge of the road, thinking all the time how much of the people's property was now perishing and how purposelessly, and how ruthless was this war the Germans were waging on all living things.

Only rarely did his eyes rest on some green patch of millet or tall maize and sunflower that had escaped the flames and then again would wander over either side of the road and stare at the

scorched ground, so dark and terrible in its mute sorrow that at times Zvyagintsev could not bear to look at it.

His body was mortally tired and begged for rest, but his mind, distracted by what it was seeing remained wide-awake. Thus, musing about the war and in order to drive away sleep, he began to mutter to himself in a scarcely audible undertone:

"Oh, you German, you German, miserable parasite that you are! All your life, you poisonous creature, you've been used to trampling and blustering around on other people's land. But what's going to happen when we move into your land with the war? Here in our country you're carrying things with a high hand, with a very high hand, slaughtering peaceful women and their innocent little ones, and now just see what a whale of a lot of grain you've sent up in flames, and how many of our villages you're razing with a light heart. . . What do you think is going to happen to you when the war gushes over to your Fritzes' land? You'll laugh on the other side of your face then, you German with the petrified soul! Right now you sit in the trenches and play on your mouth organ, but you'll forget about your mouth organ then all right; you'll lift your snout, look straight up at that bright moon and howl like a mad dog because your end will be hanging round your neck by then and you'll smell it coming! So much misery you've caused us, you German, so many children you've orphaned and so many of our women you've made widows, we'll absolutely have to visit you to even out the score. And not a single one of our officers or men will say a kind word to you then, not a single soul will forgive you, that's a dead certainty! And as for me, I'll be sure to live to see the day, you German, when we pass through your filthy land with fire and smoke, and then I'll look and see, you slimy, slithering snake, what sleeve you'll use to wipe away your tears. I've just got to see it, because I'm so wild at you I can't stand it any more, and I'm aching to bust you up and send you to your long last rest in your own snake's nest, and not here in one of our own regions. . ."

Thus he walked on, muttering under his breath and addressing some unknown

German who at that moment was for him the embodiment of the whole German army and all the evil that had been wrought by this army on Russian soil, the evil that Zvyagintsev had seen so much of in the course of the war, the evil that even now lit up the road for him with the sinister glow of conflagrations.

Thinking aloud helped Zvyagintsev to overcome his drowsiness and somehow it made him feel lighter of heart to know that in any case, whether it be sooner or later, in the end the enemy would not escape retribution, no matter how he was pushing ahead at the moment, no matter how hard he strove to put off his inevitable destruction.

"We'll come to you with the crack of doom, you son-of-a-bitch, we'll come all right! You like to go visiting, do you—well then, you'll have to like receiving visitors," muttered Zvyagintsev just the least bit louder, carried away by his thoughts.

At that moment, Lopakhin, who was wearily dragging his feet along behind Zvyagintsev, placed his hand on the latter's shoulder and asked:

"Whatever are you chattering away about, combine operator, like a blackcock at mating time? Reckoning up how much grain has been burned down? Chuck it, don't torture yourself! You haven't enough figures in your head to reckon up all these losses. You'd have to invite a professor of mathematics for that."

Zvyagintsev fell silent and after a while he replied in a voice that was already different, calm and sleepy:

"I'm just trying to keep awake by talking. . . As for the grain, of course I feel bad about it, being a farmer. Good God, what grain's been lost! A hundred and even a hundred and twenty poods per hectare is something you've got to understand, brother! To raise such grain is not just scratching up coal."

"Grain grows by itself, while coal you have to work to get. But then that's too deep for your brain. Better tell me why you're talking to yourself like a lunatic. Now if you'd start a conversation with me instead of mumbling away to yourself that would be different. This way, I keep thinking: is he in his right mind or has he taken leave of his senses in the course of the night? Don't you dare talk

to yourself any longer! I strictly forbid you to indulge in such nonsense!"

"You're no commanding officer over me to be forbidding me things," retorted Zvyagintsev with annoyance.

"You're mistaken, friend, right now I am in command over you."

Zvyagintsev turned his face to Lopakhin as he walked on and asked frowningly:

"And would you mind telling me exactly how you happen to be in command over me?"

Lopakhin tapped Zvyagintsev's helmet with a smoke-stained finger and said tauntingly:

"You should use your head to think with instead of this tin pot! Did you ask why I'm in command over you? Well, here's why: during an attack the commander is up front, isn't that so? During retreats, he goes behind, right? When we were holding the hill behind that village my trench was about twenty metres in front of yours, and at this moment you see I'm walking behind you. Now you just figure out in your miserable brain which of us is commander, you or me. And anyway, you shouldn't be handing me any back talk just now. On the contrary, you should try to please me in every way you can."

"And exactly why is that?" asked Zvyagintsev even more irritably, taking Lopakhin's joke in bad part and unable to stomach his jesting.

"Why, you blockhead, because there's only shreds left of the whole regiment and if we're going on fighting hammer and tongs just a little more like we have been up till now and defend another hill or two, well then, there'll only be three of us left in the regiment; you and me and Lissichenko, the cook. And once the three of us remain, why then I'll be holding the post of regimental commander, and I'll appoint you, nitwit that you are, chief of staff. So you had better keep on the good side of me."

Zvyagintsev shrugged his shoulders irately, straightened his rifle strap and without turning his head said in a restrained voice:

"There ain't no such thing as commanders like you."

"Why's that?"

"The commander of a regiment has to be somebody serious, somebody who knows what he's talking about..."

"And don't you think I'm serious?"

"You're a chatterbox and blabbermouth. All your life you just keep making wisecracks and twanging your tongue as if you were playing on a *balalaika*. What kind of a commander could you possibly make? You're just a pain in the neck, and no commander!"

Lopakhin coughed lightly and when he began to speak again a bantering note was clearly evident in his voice:

"Eh, Zvyagintsev, Zvyagintsev, you hick! There are all sorts of commanders, with all sorts of brains and all sorts of characters. There are serious chaps among them and jolly ones, clever men and dumb ones. But you take chiefs of staff, all of them have been made in one form, every single one of them sure enough wizards. In the old days, let me tell you, there were cases where the commander was as dumb as they make 'em, but by nature he was daring, energetic, ready to step on the neck of his nearest and dearest, understanding something about military affairs, well, and of course his chest was puffed out like an old sparrow's, his moustaches were waxed to points, he could crack out commands in a thunderous voice, while he could cuss, brother, like nobody's business—in short, the perfect commander, and that was that. But in a war there's no getting very far on just a swell appearance. You agree with that, don't you?"

Zvyagintsev nodded a quick assent, and Lopakhin continued:

"Now in a case like that, they give the commander a clever chief of staff. You take a look, and things are going way better with our wonderful commander! The higher-ups are satisfied with him, the authority of this commander rises like dough on yeast, everyone praises him, everyone talks about him, while the chief of staff, clever dog that he is, only shrinking with modesty, hides in the shade under the commander's fame, like a flower under a burdock... No one gives him any credit when it's due, no one calls him Ivan Ivanovich, yet he is the brains behind everything while the commander is only something by way of a signboard. That's how things used to be under the Pharaoh."

"Once in a while, Petya," said Zvyagintsev with a satisfied smile, "your wisecracks have some sense to them. Of course, if I, for example, would

be around you as a sort of a chief of staff, so to say, you can be sure that I wouldn't let you play the fool. After all I'm a serious sort of fellow while you, let me tell you, and no offence meant, are a bit on the giddy side. It stands to reason that with me around things would go better with you."

Lopakhin shook his head ruefully and said in a tone of reproach:

"So that's the kind of person you are, Zvyagintsev! Twisting all my words in your own favour. . ."

"What do you mean, twisted 'em? How's that?" asked Zvyagintsev warily.

"Twisted them to your advantage and that's all there is to it. It's not nice to do things like that!"

"Hold on, you yourself said that with a clever chief of staff things go better for the commander. Did you or didn't you say so?"

Feigning agreement, Lopakhin replied:

"I did, I did, I won't go back on my words. It's a fact that things do go better when a dumbish sort of commander has a clever chief of staff. But with us things'll be just the other way round: I'll make a smart commander, and you, even though you haven't got half a brain in your head, will be my chief of staff all the same. I suppose now you must be just wild to know why it's you in particular, fool that you are, that I'm suddenly appointing chief of staff, eh? Don't fret, I'll explain it all to you right away. In the first place, I'll appoint you only when out of all the men in the regiment there'll be no one left but just Petka Lissichenko, the cook, the damned to all eternity. Him I'll make a private and I'll give my orders to him, while you will work up all my strategical ideas and incidentally cook porridge, and let me tell you you'll stand to attention in front of me like a son-of-a-bitch. In the second place, if besides Petka Lissichenko there are even only a few more men left in the regiment, then you'll see the post of chief of staff as much as you can see your own ears! In that case the most you can count on is the job of aide-de-camp to my exalted person. You'll be both aide-de-camp and batman under me. You'll shine my boots, run to the kitchen for dinner and for vodka, well, and all the rest of that kind of business. . ."

The disillusioned Zvyagintsev spat fiercely and said nothing. The private

who was walking beside Lopakhin tittered softly. Evidently losing all patience, Zvyagintsev burst forth:

"You're a *balalaiika*, Lopakhin! Empty-headed! God forbid that I should have to serve under you! I'd hang myself the very next day! You do enough barking in a day to last all of a week."

"Now then, you be more careful how you express yourself, or I won't even take you on as a batman."

"Has there ever been any sorrow in your life, Lopakhin?" asked Zvyagintsev after a short silence.

Lopakhin yawned at great length, then said:

"There's sorrow in my life right now. And why do you ask?"

"There's certainly no telling by the looks of you."

"I don't wear my sorrow on my sleeve."

"Tell me, what sort of sorrow have you had, for instance?"

"The usual thing for these times: the Germans have hacked away Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the Donbas from me for the time being, and now they've most likely occupied my home town, and over there are my wife, my old man and the mine where I worked ever since I was a kid. . . I've lost a lot of my pals for good since the beginning of the war. . . Is that clear to you?"

"There! You see what you're like!" exclaimed Zvyagintsev. "Such sorrow in your life and yet you just keep right on wisecracking all the time. Can anyone consider you a serious-minded person after that? No, you're shallow, just a false front and nothing more. It's a puzzle to me how they could ever have made you a tank buster. Tank busting is a serious business, it doesn't suit your character at all: you have a gay, breezy nature and what would suit you best would be, say, to toot a horn in a brass band, hammer away at copper plates or bang a drum with a wooden stick."

"Zvyagintsev, mind what you're saying! Tell me you've been mumbling all this rubbish in your sleep, or else I'll land you one," growled Lopakhin with feigned anger.

But Zvyagintsev had already completely overcome the drowsiness in which he had been plunged, and continued to talk animatedly, turning his face to Lopakhin from time to time, and glancing into his sleepy but laughing eyes.

"And the reason you're not in the right place, Petya, is because some commanders are something like you by nature: nothing but a draught in their heads. For instance, why was I stuck in the infantry when I'm a combine operator by trade and crazy about anything in the way of a motor? According to all the rules of common sense I should be in the tank, and yet here I am in the infantry grubbing away in the ground like a mole. Or take yourself: the very thing for you would be beating a drum, cheering up people with music, and yet think of it, here you are a tank buster, the No. 1 at that. And there are even worse cases, for that matter. The unit where I first landed formed up in a little town on the Volga. There was a reserve regiment of Cossack cavalry stationed there. Well, one day reinforcements came up from the Don and the old Stavropol guberniya. The Cossacks and the men from the Stavropol districts were assigned to us in the infantry—the Cossacks became sappers, signalmen, and the devil alone knows where else they were stuck, while the workers who had been mobilized in Rostov were shoved into the cavalry, dressed up in Cossack breeches with red stripes, blue uniforms and all the rest of it. And there were the Cossacks tapping away with axes, learning to fix up bridges and sighing every time they looked at a horse, while the Rostov men—all of them skilled workers before the war, some of them carpenters, some house-painters, some book-binders, and so on and so forth—were fiddling around the horses, scared to go near them because most likely the only time they'd ever seen a horse before the war was in their dreams. And the horses that had been sent to the regiment were from the Kalmyk steppes around Salsk, three-year-olds, unbroken, never saddled before, that is. Can you imagine the state of affairs? Plenty of laughing and plenty of tears! The poor carpenter-painters would set about saddling some unbroken horse, a few would gather round it, and the damn horse would neigh, rear and buck, bite, or else drop down and roll on the ground just like some of these hussies who go around throwing faints. . . . Do you call that a system? Once I was on guard near a railway depot and I saw a reserve squadron being sent off to the front. The squadron commander

gave the order to saddle up, and out of a hundred and fifty men, about forty of 'em—just like those Rostov painters and carpenters—couldn't throw the saddle across the horses' backs properly—that's the God's honest truth! The commander grabbed hold of his hair and began to cuss till the air was that thick a fly couldn't get through, yet in what way are these carpenters-painters to blame? That's the sort of thing that's going on, brother! And it's all because you sometimes get commanders like you, with nothing but hot air in their heads."

"Just my luck to have started you off," said Lopakhin pretending to sigh. "I started you off, and now you're simply blithering, piling everything up in a heap, all the way from sermons for the living to mass for the dead, and all just to prove that I won't make a commander. Just to spite you I'll become a commander, and then you just wait and see, I'll knock the nonsense out of you! I'll make you fine as silk yet, and pull you through the eye of a needle! Before Kolya Streltsov was sent off to the hospital he asked me to keep an eye on you. 'Keep an eye on that half-wit, on that Zvyagintsev,' he said, 'or else, you never can tell, he's liable to get killed yet on account of his dumbness!' And so now I'm taking care of you. I'll have a talk with him, thinks I, and distract him from his gloomy thoughts. And now I'm sorry myself that I started you off. All I'm thinking of now is what to shut your mouth with so's you'd be quiet for a bit. . . . Would you like to chew on a bit of hard tack?"

"Let's have it."

"Here's two bits, only for Christ's sake shut up and don't argue with me! I hate like poison being contradicted by underlings."

Zvyagintsev snorted, but took the hard tack all the same, and as he munched on it he began to speak drowsily:

"Now that Mikola Streltsov was a regular fellow, a real serious chap, nothing like you, you empty barrel. And it's a lie when you say he called me a half-wit. He had a terrible lot of respect for me, and I for him too. We always used to talk about our family life, and about everything in general. Now he would make a commander, because he's a man who knows what he's talking about; he's real educated, worked as an agro-

nomist before the war. Why, even his wife chucked him because of his serious nature. And what are you? A miner, a coal creature. The only thing you know how to do is scratch up coal besides shooting somehow or other out of that long gun of yours and missing half the time. . . ."

Zvyagintsev kept on talking about Streltsov's good qualities for a long time, and then his voice began to die down, his speech became incoherent and he fell silent. For some time he walked on with his head bent, stumbling along. Suddenly he swayed violently, left the ranks and walked off at a tangent. Lopakhin saw Zvyagintsev's legs began to buckle under him as he walked and realized that he was actually walking in his sleep and would drop at any moment. Running over to him, Lopakhin grasped his elbow firmly and shook him.

"Buck up, old man, no call to go breaking the ranks," he said affectionately.

And so unexpected and unusual was the warm undertone in Lopakhin's rough voice that Zvyagintsev, fully awake now, stared at him closely and asked in a hoarse voice:

"I sort of dozed off, did I, Petya?"

"You didn't doze off, you fell sound asleep, like an old nag in harness. If I hadn't held you up you'd have landed on your nose. You've got the strength of a horse, but you're a bit weak as far as sleep goes."

"That's true enough," agreed Zvyagintsev. "I'm liable to fall asleep on my feet again. As soon as you notice me nodding my head, I want you to please poke me in the back, and hard at that, or else I won't feel it."

"Now that's something I'll do with pleasure! I'll poke you for all I'm worth between the shoulder blades with the butt of my gun," promised Lopakhin, and putting an arm around Zvyagintsev's broad shoulders he held out his tobacco pouch.

"Here, Vanya," he said, "roll yourself a fag, it'll keep you awake. I must say you look pretty miserable when you're sleepy, just like a Rumanian war prisoner, even worse."

Humblly following Lopakhin, Zvyagintsev held the tobacco pouch hesitantly and with a sigh of regret said:

"There's only enough for one fag here.

Take it back, I won't go robbing you. We've gone pretty low in tobacco. . . ."

Lopakhin pushed away his comrade's hand and said sternly:

"Light up, and don't argue!" And vainly trying to hide a shamefaced masculine tenderness behind an assumed severity, concluded: "Not only wouldn't you grudge a good pal your last tobacco, but sometimes you wouldn't even grudge sacrificing your last drop of blood. . . . And you're a decent pal and not such a bad soldier. You don't bunk when you see a tank, you handle a bayonet like you should, and you pitch into a scrap with such fury that you fall off your feet on the march. And I have a hell of a lot of respect for people who aren't wishy-washy and who fight until they drop. You have to go after the German scum as if it were piece work. You've taken on the job, well then keep at it until you finish it up properly. You can't get away with cold-blooded time work here. So light-up, Vanya, and good luck to you. And you know what else? Please don't get sore at my jokes. Maybe what with a bit of a joke it's easier for me both to live and to fight—don't you realize that?"

Whether it was the last shred of tobacco that he received from his comrade when things were going hard or the tender note of friendly sympathy that had crept into Lopakhin's voice, or, perhaps, the acute loneliness that Zvyagintsev experienced after Nikolai Streltsov had been taken to the hospital in a passing cart, the fact remains that something drew Zvyagintsev closer to Lopakhin.

At dawn, when what had remained of the regiment merged with a formation that was defending the approaches to the river crossing, Zvyagintsev already looked at Lopakhin as he was fixing up a reserve trench with different eyes than he had regarded him before. He himself, as ever, groaning and cursing the hard ground and his bitter lot as a soldier, finished digging his trench quickly, and then walked over to Lopakhin with a smile in the corners of his mouth and said:

"Here, let me lend you a hand, it somehow doesn't do for a future regimental commander to be scratching around in the ground. . . ." And spitting on the palms of his hands, he set to work with the shovel.

Lopakhin accepted Zvyagintsev's services with mute gratitude, but a few minutes later he was already shouting at him authoritatively and plaguing him with ribald jokes. Slapping the hot perspiring back of his new friend, he said:

"Dig deeper, my good pilgrim! Why are you only wriggling around on top like an old fogey? In digging, as in love, you have to reach a certain depth and you like to dig around on top. Shallow, that's what you are, and that's why your wife writes to you so seldom, can't remember anything good about you, you red-headed devil! . . ."

Lean and wiry Lopakhin worked with the professional ease and speed of a miner, practically without rest, wasting no time on smoking. On his swarthy face, into the pores of which the bluish coal dust had eaten, drops of sweat glistened in tiny beads and his thin virulent lips were pressed tightly together. Deftly he threw out the stones wedged in the clayey soil and when a big rock would not yield to his efforts, such picturesque and involved curses would issue from between his clenched teeth, that even Zvyagintsev—himself a master-hand in this sphere—straightened his back in wonder for a moment, shook his head, and licking his parched lips, remarked reproachfully:

"Good God, how foul-mouthed you are, Petya! You might try cussing a little less often and not quite so deliberately. It's positively inhuman the way you swear, as if you were going up a ladder—I just keep waiting and waiting for you to put your feet on the last rung, but you never do. . . ."

Lopakhin bared his white teeth the least bit in a faint smile, and with a mischievous flash of his light eyes said:

"It's a question, brother, as to who's used to mentioning what the oftenest. Now you keep saying 'good God' after every word, while I have another saying. . . . But then you're a country bumpkin, used to riding around on a combine and breathing pure oxygen. Your nerves are in order because of your physical work. What would you be getting into the habit of swearing for? But I'm a miner. Before the war I used to do as much as three hundred per cent and more of the regular daily assignment of work in the drift. You can't do three

hundred per cent of your quota by sheer brute force without using your brains and so you have to consider that my work is really brain work. Now then, my delicate nerves, like everyone's who does brain work, were shattered, and that's why sometimes, just to calm myself, I cuss with a bang—good and proper. And as for you, if your noble upbringing does not permit you to listen to the words with which I ease my mind, stuff your ears with cotton wool. In peace-time the artillerymen used to do that so as not to be deafened by the firing—they say it helped. . . ."

When they had finished digging the reserve trench, Lopakhin got the idea of digging a ditch to join the two trenches, but the exhausted Zvyagintsev protested in no uncertain tones:

"What's the matter with you? Getting ready to spend the winter here? I'm not doing any digging."

"I may not intend spending the winter here, but I've got to stick here until the others get across the river. Did you see all the materiel that passed on its way to the crossing at night? Some lot, I'll say! I can't be leaving all that stuff to the Germans, my economical soul won't permit it. Get me?" said Lopakhin with unwonted seriousness.

"You're nuts, Petya! Whenever will we manage to dig a ditch forty metres long? You can stick here without a communication trench as long as you like. What the devil do you need it for? If you have to, when you get the urge, you'll crawl over, you'll crawl over like a honey! What are you poking your shovel in my teeth for? I said I'm not going to do any more digging and I'm not! What do you think I am anyway, a sapper or something? I'm no fool to be wasting my energy on nothing. If you want to so badly, make your own communication trench, a kilometre long for all I care, but as for me, you can't catch me, brother, I'm not doing any more digging!"

"And am I supposed to crawl across this bald patch when I change my position?" With a grand gesture Lopakhin indicated the bare ground, scantily covered with withered grass. "The very first round would drive me into the ground like a nail right up to the head! They'd make mincemeat out of me. There's human gratitude for you: you protect him from

the tanks with your breast and he's too lazy to stick his shovel into the ground an extra time. . . Go to hell! I'll dig it without you! Only I warn you in advance: when I get to be commander don't you go expecting me to recommend you for decoration! You can hop around as much as you like, strain every nerve to distinguish yourself—eat the Fritzes alive then, for all I care, but you won't even get as much as a button!"

"Just the thing to scare me with," said Zvyagintsev with a wan smile. Nevertheless even though it was with evident reluctance, he began to dig again.

While he and the No. 2, Alexander Kopytovsky, a young clumsy fellow with a face as broad as a pot lid and a curly forelock poking out from under his forage cap, were cleaning their shovels from the clay that had stuck to them, Lopakhin scrambled out of the trench and looked around.

The grass was thickly covered with dew which weighed heavily on the stems plumed with dead blades, dragging them down to the ground. The sun had only just come up and beyond the distant poplar grove where a gleaming bend of the Don could be seen a mist hung low over the water. The trees on the bank shrouded in mist to the ground, seemed to be bathing in bubbling jets of water, as if at floodtide in the spring.

The defence zone passed through the outskirts of a village. The survivors of the regiment, who now formed a company, occupied a sector not far from a long building with a red-tile roof and a big fenced-in orchard adjoining it.

Lopakhin looked around him for a long time calculating the distance to the crest of the hill that lay in front of them and taking note of aiming points. Then he remarked in a satisfied tone:

"What a wonderful view I have! This is not what you call a position, it's a pleasure! From here I'll give it those Deutsch panzers so that all you'll see is chips flying from the tanks, while there'll be nothing left of the tankmen but grilled meat and scorched wool, half and half."

"You're mighty brave just now," said Sasha Kopytovsky maliciously as he straightened his back. "You've become mighty brave and cocky now you know that besides our gun there are the devil knows how many others, be-

sides anti-tank guns. But yesterday when the tanks were making for us, I must say you got kind of pale around the gills."

"I always turn pale when they head for me," Lopakhin admitted simply.

"And the way you yelled at me in a real goat's squeak: 'Get the shells ready!' As if I don't know what I have to do without your telling me! Seems you have ladies' nerves too. . ."

Lopakhin said nothing. He was listening to something. From somewhere beyond the orchard there came the sound of a woman's voice and the rattling of pots or cans. Lopakhin's aimlessly wandering eyes suddenly brightened up and began to dance; he stretched out his neck and bending slightly forward, strained his ears, his attention completely concentrated.

"What are you pointing out like a hunting dog for scented game, have you?" taunted Kopytovsky. But Lopakhin made no reply.

Wet with the dew, the red-tile roof of the white building glistened faintly. The slanting rays of the sun gilded the tile and gleamed gaily on the windowpanes. Between the trees Lopakhin caught sight of two women, and immediately came to a decision.

"I say, Sashka, you stay here and defend the interests of our country while I beat it for a minute into that there tile establishment," he said to Kopytovsky with a wink.

The latter raised his ashen, dust-laden eyebrows in surprise and asked.

"What do you need there?"

"I have a hunch that if it's not a school and not a TB hospital in that building then there's a chance of getting something interesting for breakfast there."

"Most likely it's a veterinary hospital," remarked Kopytovsky, after a pause. "As a matter of fact it's quite clear that it's a veterinary hospital, and except for the mange or perhaps the itch you'll get nothing for breakfast there."

Lopakhin screwed up his eyes scornfully and asked:

"And why exactly would it be a hospital and a veterinary hospital at that? Did you see it in a vision, my clairvoyant?"

"Because it's sterner all by itself, away from everything and besides just a

little while ago I heard a cow moo over there and so complainingly that it's a sure thing she's been brought there for treatment."

Somewhat shaken in his conjecture Lopakhin whistled moodily and disappointedly for a moment but in the end he decided to go all the same.

"I'll go and scout around," he said. "And if the C.S.M. or anyone else asks where yours truly is, tell 'em he's gone to the latrine, tell 'em he's got an awful belly-ache and that for all you know it's even dysentery."

Bending over double, dragging his feet and grimacing as if he were suffering, Lopakhin skirted Lieutenant Goloshchokov's bunker, slipped past the signalmen, who were laying a line from the command post and plunged into the orchard. But as soon as the cherry trees hid him from view, he straightened out, tightened his belt, pushed back his helmet rakishly and waddling along on his bow legs headed for the hospitably wide-open door of the building.

When he was still some distance away he saw women's figures flitting around near a barn and a row of white milk cans gleaming in the sun and came to the firm conviction that in front of him was a dairy of a collective farm. Great was his disappointment when, after deftly jumping over the fence, he unexpectedly discovered a portly old man near the barn issuing some order to the women. Lopakhin always preferred to have dealings with women when he was out foraging. He believed implicitly in the kindness and wax-like pliability of a woman's heart, in spite of his fairly frequent reverses in love affairs, and he believed as well in his own irresistibility. . . . As for old men, he simply detested them, all of them without exception, considering them skinflints, and he always did his best to avoid having anything to do with them on any matter. But just then it was impossible to avoid the old man. To all appearances, it was he who was in charge here.

Steeling his heart and wishing the innocent old man a speedy and happy end Lopakhin turned toward the barn, no longer strutting along breezily and jauntily like a ladykiller, but marching like a soldier, first straightening the helmet on his head and quenching the gay sparkle in his eyes.

Running his eyes over the square shoulders and straight back of the old man, Lopakhin thought:

"Most likely an ex-sergeant major, whiskered devil that he is! I'll have to treat him with respect, no two ways about it."

Coming up to within a few paces of the old man, he clicked his heels smartly, saluted and greeted him as if he were at least a divisional commander. His presumption proved correct. The old man was obviously impressed by his manner and raising his gnarled hand to the vizor of his faded Cossack cap, he replied in a no less respectful but thunderous bass:

"Good day."

"What you got here, Dad, collective farm stables?" asked Lopakhin with a naive glance at the cattleshed.

"No, this is our dairy farm. We're getting ready to hop it. . . ."

"Pretty late to be going about it," said Lopakhin sternly. "You should have thought about it before."

The old man sighed, stroked his beard, and looking past Lopakhin said:

"You've been hoofing it pretty fast, my brave warriors, to get as far as our village so soon. . . . Day before yesterday the radio said there was fighting around Rossosh and before we had a chance to look around, here you are near our bases, most likely dragging the Germans behind you. . . ."

The conversation had begun to take a turn highly undesirable for Lopakhin and he skilfully diverted it into a new channel, asking thoughtfully:

"Do you mean to say you haven't sent the cows across the Don yet? You most likely have pretty good cows, eh, pedigree?"

"Our cows are like all the rest on our farm, they're not cows but pure gold!" replied the old man enthusiastically. "We got them over the river last night, but as for the rest of the farm gear, so far we're still getting it across and as to whether we'll actually get it across or not I won't say because there's such a riot at the crossing that God forbid! The Germans have been dropping bombs on the bridge for two days already, damaging it whenever there's a hit. And on top of everything, all kinds of army cards, thousands of 'em

are jammed up around there, while commanders are going for each other near the bridge. Where do we come in with our junk to be crossing over! . . ."

"Yes, it's a ticklish business," Lopakhin agreed. "But don't you go getting upset, old man, our valiant regiment has undertaken to defend this place, so you can be sure that the Germans will never get across to the other side of the Don right off the bat. We intend giving them a good bleeding on this side yet."

"Our place'll be done for, everything'll go up in flames if there's going to be any fighting here," said the old man in a trembling voice.

"Yes, Dad, looks like your place will get it, but we'll defend it as long as we're able."

"May God be with you!" said the old man fervently and was just about to cross himself when his glance happened to fall on Lopakhin and the medal on his chest. His hand stopped short of his forehead and he began to stroke his long grey beard slowly.

"I suppose it's your outfit digging in back of the orchard?" he asked after a silence.

"Right you are, Dad, that's our outfit. We're digging away pitching in like blazes, but our mouths are as dry as shoe leather. . . ."

Lopakhin paused diplomatically but the old man had apparently not understood the hint. He was still stroking his beard and staring at the milkmaids who were loading the milk cans onto a cart. Suddenly his eyes flashed fiercely and he shouted out in a voice of thunder:

"Glashka, devil take you, why isn't the mare here yet? I suppose you'll get a move on when the Germans begin firing!"

A plump, shapely milkmaid with raspberry lips and full breasts flashed a quick glance at Lopakhin, whispered something to the women who burst into soft laughter and only then called back in a leisurely voice:

"They'll be bringing her up soon, Luka Mikhailovich, don't worry, you'll have time to get your old woman down to the Don. . . ."

Lopakhin did not remove his eyes from the milkmaid, gazing at her enchantedly and blinking as if dazzled by the bright

sunlight. With a noticeable effort he tore his eyes from the tanned rosy-cheeked woman's face, sighed and asked in a voice that somehow had suddenly become husky:

"I say, Dad, your collective farm did pretty well before the war, didn't it? Your people look as if they were very decently fed. . . ."

"We lived first-rate, had a school, a hospital, a clubhouse and all the rest of it, not to speak of grub. We had our fill of everything, and now we have to leave it all behind. What'll we come back to? To charred tree stumps, as sure as there's a God in heaven," said the old man ponderously.

Any other time Lopakhin would probably have sympathised with the sorrow of a fellow man, but just then he had no time to spare, and took another step towards making the old man understand the purpose of his visit:

"The well water you have here is salty. We dig away at those trenches and want to drink something fierce, but your water is absolutely impossible. How come you haven't any good water here?" he asked reproachfully.

"Salty?" echoed the old man in astonishment. "What well did you draw it from?"

Lopakhin had not drunk any water in this village and of course was absolutely unaware of the location of the well, hence he merely waved his hand vaguely in the direction of the school building that was just visible beyond the trees. The old man looked even more surprised.

"Well, I'll be blowed! Why, the school well has the best water in the whole district. The whole village gets its drinking water from there. What under the sun could have made it go bad? They brought water from there yesterday, sparkling water, good water. I drank some myself."

He stared at the ground thoughtfully. Clearing his throat in annoyance, Lopakhin said:

"Beside's we're forbidden to drink raw water, Dad, so's we shouldn't get diarrhoea or some other stomach upset."

"You can drink our water even if it's raw," said the old man stubbornly. "We clean the well out every year. Everybody in the village drinks that water and so far no one's had any trouble with his belly."

Lopakhin had exhausted all possibilities of a delicate approach, the old man wouldn't take a hint and in desperation he took the bit between his teeth:

"Can't we get any milk from you here, or at least a bit of butter?"

"For that, son, you'll have to apply to the manager of the dairy farm. There she is standing near the milkmaids, that plump one, the roly-poly there in the grey shawl."

"And you... what would you be here then?" asked Lopakhin in bewilderment.

Stroking his beard, the old man replied proudly:

"I'm working here for the third year already as a stableman. God grant that everyone works like I do—take charge of the hay-making I do, keep watch over all the farm belongings, see that everything's just so on the farm. I was down for a bonus this year..."

He went on to say something else, but Lopakhin, vexedly smacking his helmet with the palm of his hand and moving his lips soundlessly had already moved off towards the woman in the grey shawl.

The manageress proved to be a simple, good-natured soul. She listened attentively to Lopakhin's request and said:

"We've sent a hundred and fifty litres of milk and some butter to the hospital for the wounded. There's a little left, and we can't take it along with us any way. Would two cans of milk be enough for your men? Glasha, let this officer have two cans of milk from last night's milking and if there's any butter left in the ice-cellar give him two or three kilograms as well."

Well-pleased and flattered at being taken for an officer Lopakhin pressed the hand of the kind-hearted manageress warmly and nimbly turned into the cellar. Taking the cold, sweating milk cans from the milkmaid, he said enthusiastically:

"I don't know your patronymic, Glasha, but you're a wonder of a woman! Whipped cream, that's what you are! Suit my taste to a T—I could just swallow you up at a single sitting: spread you bit by bit on a hunk of bread and gobble you up even without any salt..."

"I am what I am," replied the unapproachable milkmaid sternly.

20 "Don't be modest, Glasha, you're a

real treat, only not mine, that's the whole pity of it! How did you get that way, was it the fresh milk, or curds and whey?" Lopakhin continued admiringly.

"Take the cans and let's go. You'll come for the butter later."

"I could stay here in this ice-cellar with you for the rest of my life," said Lopakhin in a tone of conviction.

With a stealthy glance at the half open door, he tried to embrace the plump milkmaid but she deftly pushed away Lopakhin's arm, showed him a big bronzed fist, and smiling amicably said:

"Look here, young fellow, this'll cool you off sooner than the ice. I'm an honest widow and I don't care for this sort of monkey-business."

"I'm willing to stand anything from a widow like you, but I don't intend retreating, I've already retreated enough to make my stomach turn," said Lopakhin placatingly, and nothing daunted reached out for the milkmaid, bending over to her laughing raspberry lips.

Just then the matted door of the cellar flew open most inopportunistically, and a dark figure loomed up in the doorway while a stentorian, elderly bass voice roared:

"Glikeria! What have you got stuck here for? Did the hem of your skirt freeze to the ice or something? Get a move on you, now, and see to it you bring me that mare in two ticks!"

Lopakhin turned away, cursing under his breath and rattling the milk cans as he began to ascend the damp slippery steps. Outside, he waited a moment for the milkmaid, who was following close behind still smiling mischievously, and asked:

"Are you going to hop it across the Don, or are you staying? I want to know just in case."

"We're leaving right now, soldier boy. Maybe you'll come with us?"

"So far it's not on my way," replied Lopakhin in a much drier tone, but immediately his hoarse voice again assumed a dulcet, cooing tenderness. "But if it comes to that, tell me, Glasha, where will we meet?"

Laughing and pushing Lopakhin away from the door with a determined shoulder the milkmaid replied:

"I don't see that there's any reason for us to be meeting, but if you really want to see me so much that you can't stand it, look for me in the woods on the other

side of the Don. We won't be going far from our place."

Sighing and cursing his unfortunate lot as a soldier, Lopakhin made his way to the orchard, weighed down with the milk cans. He very much wanted to take another look at the widow, so stern in behaviour but with such amazingly caressing, reddish glints in her eyes. He turned his head and nearly fell as his foot caught in a root and immediately the peals of a woman's laughter sped to his ears and penetrated to his very heart.

In the bunker, Lopakhin took a long pull from the can, gulping down the cold life-giving liquid after which, satiated with the milk he had drunk and childishly happy, he instructed Kopytovsky to hand out the rest to the men of the company, a mess tin full per man, strictly enjoining him not to neglect the others if any remained. He himself made ready to go off again, but Kopytovsky advised him not to:

"The C.S.M. 'll be sore, don't go."

Smiling dreamily, Lopakhin said:

"Perhaps I myself wouldn't go, but my feet are simply carrying me on their own. . . There's a milkmaid there by the name of Glasha who's such a darling that if not for the war I'd be willing to spend the rest of my life with her under a cow's belly yanking titties."

Screwing up his eyes and clapping his grimy palm over his mouth, Kopytovsky asked between the gusts of laughter that shook his voice:

"Whose titties?"

"Oh, that's not important," replied Lopakhin distractedly, his mind elsewhere.

His glance wandered past the thick-leaved green trees and rested for a long time on the red-tile roof of the dairy farm.

"You look out you don't get it from the C.S.M. today. He's been as wild as a chained dog for some reason or other ever since yesterday," warned Kopytovsky.

Lopakhin waved his hand.

"You take my advice and go straight to the devil together with the sergeant major!" he said irritably. "What's the idea of him not letting me make a single step? Tell him Lopakhin's gone to get butter, treat him to some milk and everything'll be hunky-dory. And if he tries to pick on me, I'll sing him a

tune he won't forget so soon! I can't eat Lissichenko's muck any more, it's giving me ulcers. Let them give us the full Mikoyan regulation ration, and then I won't go panhandling. What do you think I am, balmy or something, to be turning down butter when kind people offer it on their own hook? What should I do, leave it for the enemy?"

"Oh well, if they're giving away butter, there's no reason to be losing time, go right ahead," hastily agreed Kopytovsky.

A minute later Lopakhin was already striding down the familiar path in the orchard, listening to the early morning twittering of the birds and delightedly breathing in the fresh, elusive fragrance of the dew-wet grass.

Despite the fact that he had had practically no sleep for several days on end, that he had not eaten his fill and had made an exhausting forced march of over two hundred kilometres, fighting on the way, he was in excellent spirits that morning. How much does a man need in time of war? To get a little farther away from death than usual, to rest, to have a good sleep and eat his fill, to get a letter from home and to have a leisurely smoke with his mates; there you have all that goes to make up the quickly maturing happiness of a soldier. True, Lopakhin had not received a letter that morning, but to make up for it, on the night before, the men had been issued the long-awaited tobacco, a can of bully beef each and a fully adequate supply of ammunition. Lopakhin had managed to snatch a wink of sleep before dawn, after which, fresh and in high spirits, he had dug trenches, confident that here, at the Don, their painful retreat would finally come to a halt. And this time the work did not seem to him half so annoyingly hateful as it had always seemed to him before. He was very much satisfied with the position that had been taken up, but even more satisfied with having drunk his fill of milk and having met the astoundingly beautiful widow Glasha. Devil take it! It would, of course, have been much better to have made her acquaintance somewhere on leave. Then he would have been able to go at things in real style, bring back something of the old days, but even this brief encounter had afforded him a few

pleasant moments. And in the course of the war, he had become accustomed both to small favours and to reconciling himself to any loss. . .

Smiling at his own thoughts and whistling softly to himself, Lopakhin walked down the path, striding through the drooping, dew-laden burdock leaves. At first he paid no attention to the scarcely audible, low, persistent drone coming from somewhere over the hills. But soon this drone became clearer, and Lopakhin stopped short, pricking up his ears. By the sound he guessed that German planes were heading his way and almost simultaneously he heard the long-drawn-out cry:

"Air-cr-aft!"

Lopakhin turned abruptly and made a loping dash for the trenches. For only a second the sad thought flashed through his mind: "That is the end of my butter, and of Glasha too. . ." But after that, distressing as this twofold loss was, he forgot about it for a long time. . .

Fourteen German planes, just coming over the edge of the horizon, were streaking his way. Lopakhin had not yet reached his fox-hole when he heard the boom of AA guns from the school orchard. The dark-grey corollas of explosions opened up just in front and somewhat under the leading planes. Then the explosions began to increase, and spreading in the cloudless sky, floated beside the aircraft, breaking up their formation and forcing them to change their course.

"That's one done for!" Sashka Kopytovsky shouted joyously.

Lopakhin jumped into the fox-hole, and when he raised his head he saw that the leading plane, keeling over absurdly on one wing, was donning a pall of black smoke and beginning to lose altitude, coming down at a slant. With a terrific whistling and wailing, enveloped in smoke and flame, it dived over the line of trenches and burst on its own bombs as it hit the hard-packed ground of the village pasture. The roar of the explosion was so powerful that Lopakhin blinked. Then he turned a beaming face to Sashka and said:

"Pretty good filling he had. . . If only those ack-ack devils would fire like that always!"

One more plane fell to pieces in the air as the result of a direct hit and dropped to the ground, this time far beyond the village. The others succeeded in breaking through to the crossing. Encountering the fire of machine-guns and the second AA battery, which was emplaced at the crossing, they unloaded their bombs at random, and made off in a westerly direction, avoiding the danger zone.

The dust raised by the bombs had not yet settled when a second wave of German bombers surged over the hills, this time numbering about thirty aircraft. Four planes broke away from the formation and turned towards the defence zone.

"They're making for us," muttered Sashka through clenched teeth in a voice that trembled. "Look, Lopakhin, they're dive-bombers, they'll be coming down right away. . . Here they come!"

Lopakhin, who had paled slightly, set up his gun, and resting his foot heavily on the fire-step of the trench, took careful aim. His light eyes were squinting so narrowly that when Sashka flashed a glance at him he saw only tiny slits looking like knife cuts with deep wrinkles at the corners of the darkened skin that covered his eyes.

"Aim for three plane lengths. . . three and a half. . . four plane lengths ahead!" Sashka managed to shout despite his excitement in a voice that cut through the ear-splitting howl of the motors.

Lopakhin heard his shout as in a dream and the familiar cracked voice of Lieutenant Goloshchokov bawling out in a high-pitched voice the usual:

"At the enemy aircraft! . . ."

In the tiniest fraction of a second he managed to fire and feel the kick with his shoulder and his whole body and he managed to realize too that he had missed. The familiar, disgusting whine of a bomb followed instantaneously, culminating in a deafening roar. Like huge hailstones, clods of flying earth drummed down on Lopakhin's helmet and bent back, while the acrid metallic odour of burning explosives penetrated his nostrils and caught his breath. Bombs kept bursting near the trenches, but by far the most of the explosions thundered behind the trenches, in the school orchard. Making an effort, Lo-

Lopakhin raised his head and through the turbid haze of whirling dust he saw to the left a plane rocketing into the blue sky, even made out the swastika on its tail. Bounding up like a spring and gritting his teeth in a fury, he bent to his gun again.

"Give it to the bastard! Give it to him quick! . . ." Sashka shouted in his ear, trembling feverishly.

No, this time Lopakhin could not, had no right to miss! He seemed to have turned to stone, and only his hands, the hands with the steely strength of a miner, utterly at one with the gun, moved to the left, while his screwed-up eyes, bloodshot and flashing with hatred, slid in front of the speeding aircraft, making a necessary allowance. And yet, this time too, he missed. . . His lips trembled when he saw the plane reach the necessary altitude and with a roar turn and again begin to dive down over the trenches.

"Reload!" he shouted in a voice seething with rage.

The Junkers-87 dived abruptly, showing the yellow nests of the trenches with fire from all its machine-guns. Spluttering furiously, Sergeant Niki-forov's sub-machine-gun encountered it with fire, while pattering rifle shots kept cracking away dully, merging with the rattle of tommy-gun bursts. Lopakhin bided his time. He kept his eyes fixed steadily on the aircraft, which was diving with a low, long-drawn-out and increasingly loud wail, and at the same time his ears automatically caught all the varied sounds of fire: the thunderous roar of high-explosive bombs falling in the school orchard near the fire position of the AA battery, the frequent ack-ack blows, and the thrill of machine-guns. He was even able to distinguish several shots fired from anti-tank guns. Evidently he was not the only one using an anti-tank gun against the brazen dive-bomber.

"What you standing there for like a dummy? What you standing there for like that, I ask you? You haven't been hit, have you?" shouted Sashka.

But Lopakhin merely rapped out a brief and heated oath without removing his eyes from the plane, and Sashka crouched down on the uneven earth-strewn bottom of the trench convinced that Lopakhin was alive and unscathed.

In the second sweep, the boiling stream of machine-gun fire raised a cloud of dust and shaved the low worm-wood clean away in front of the breastwork of the trench, catching the edge of the breastwork itself, but still Lopakhin did not stir.

"Duck! He'll nail you, you dumbbell!" shouted Sashka at the top of his lungs.

"That's a lie, he'll never get the chance!" barked Lopakhin hoarsely, and holding out for another second or so until the plane began to come out of its dive, he pressed the trigger.

The aircraft nose-dived slightly, but flattened out immediately and headed south, fluttering like a wounded bird and gaining altitude slowly and uncertainly. A sinister stream of smoke began to rise near the port wing.

"Ha! Had your fill of flying, you so-and-so!" muttered Lopakhin under his breath, straightening his back and rising to his full height in the trench. "Had your fill of flying!" he murmured even more softly and significantly, eagerly following every move of the crippled plane.

Before reaching the hill, the plane banked violently and plummeted to the ground almost like a stone. It landed with a crack that sounded like a hard-boiled egg being broken open on a table nearby, and only then did Lopakhin, sighing with vast and happy relief filling his lungs, turn his face to Sashka.

"That's how we've got to get them!" he said distending his whitened nostrils and no longer hiding his triumph.

"I'll say, you certainly got him neatly, Pyotr Fedotovich!" exclaimed Sashka enthusiastically, calling Lopakhin by his full name and patronymic probably for the first time in all their long period of service together.

With trembling hands Lopakhin hastily rolled himself a cigarette and, sinking exhaustedly and somehow nervelessly to the bottom of the trench, avidly inhaled two or three puffs at once.

"I thought he was getting away, damn him!" he said, more calmly, but still speaking slowly as a result of his agitation. "He'd have limped over the hill, and then the devil alone knows whether he would have crashed or made it back to his den. But this way, it's a sure thing, crashed to the ground and there

he can burn away and good luck to him. . ."

Without waiting to finish his cigarette, he got up and gazed in satisfied silence for a moment at the ruins of the downed aircraft smouldering in the distance. The other three planes that had been bombing the AA battery had scooted away to the south, but bombers were still wheeling like vultures over the crossing, bombs were bursting, ack-ack guns were dumbly blazing away while pale green pillars of water enveloped in rainbow spray from the sunlight rose high into the air. The raid was soon over and a runner instructed Lopakhin to report to the company commander.

The whole field in front of the trenches and behind them looked ulcerated, covered with round yellow craters of all sizes ringed with baked earth. The winding paths that had been hewn in the orchard by bombs and littered with felled and splintered trees laid bare the walls and roofs of the village houses, formerly screened by the branches, and everything round about looked unusual now—new, queer and unfamiliar. Not far from Zvyagintsev's trench a big crater yawned. Right near the breastwork lay the tail of a small bomb, half covered with earth, its metallic edges twisted and shiny. But almost everywhere cigarette smoke was already rising fragrantly over the riflemen's trenches and the voices of the men could be heard in conversation, while from an old, half-ruined silo pit that had been fitted up as a machine-gun nest came the sound of someone's cheerful voice, interrupted by bursts of such hearty but choked laughter that Lopakhin smiled as he passed by.

"Some men, devil take it!" he thought to himself. "There's no putting them down! Bombed so they didn't know whether they were standing on their head or their feet, but no sooner does it blow over than they go whinnying away like impatient stud-horses. . ."

And he too burst into involuntary laughter as he caught Sergeant Nikiforov's familiar voice, high-pitched and tearful with laughter, concluding:

" . . . I takes a look, and there he is with his arse in the air, his head shaking away, and asking me: 'Haven't they killed me, Fedya?..' And his eyes—

as big as a fist they were and simply popping out of his head, and he smelling like a boiled turnip. . . He was so scared, you see, he most likely. . ."

Someone in the big trench there was laughing exhaustedly and faintly, completely played out, but not letting up, as if someone had trussed him up and was tickling him mercilessly.

Still smiling, Lopakhin passed the machine-gunners and skirting a crater caught up with the runner.

"Cheerful guy that Nikiforov," he remarked.

"Right now it's laughing for some, tears for others and eternal glory for still others. . ." replied the runner gloomily, pointing to a fox-hole that had been destroyed by a direct hit and to a Red Army man in a blood-stained tunic who was walking in the distance, swaying drunkenly and leaning helplessly on the arm of a medical orderly.

Lieutenant Goloshchokov met Lopakhin with a broad smile and motioned him to come down into the trench. Taking advantage of the brief lull, he had just breakfasted hastily. Wiping his mouth with a filthy handkerchief and winking slyly, he asked:

"Was it you who bagged him, Lopakhin?"

"I guess it was, Comrade Lieutenant."

"Neat work. Was that your first?"

"My first."

"Sit down and make yourself at home. You say it's your first, but let's hope it's not the last, eh?" went on the lieutenant cheerily as he put the mess tin with the unfinished muck into a nook and brought out a big flask that had once belonged to the enemy.

The lieutenant's trench smelled not only of wormwood and damp clay that had not yet dried, but also of leather bandoliers, the least bit of eau de Cologne, of vinegary-tart male sweat and makhorka. Lopakhin thought of the amazing speed with which people gave their trenches a lived-in air, filling their temporary residences with their own smells, all of which differed and each was peculiar to the particular individual alone. For no rhyme or reason he recalled Sergeant Nikiforov's words and smiled, but the lieutenant interpreted his smile in his own way, and as he poured the vodka into an aluminium cup, he said reticently:

"It's our neighbours, the ack-ack men, who supplied the fuel today. I haven't had any of my own for a long time already. . . Well, let me congratulate you on your success. Here, drink it down."

Lopakhin took the proffered cup gingerly in two fingers, thanking the lieutenant but thinking with disappointment that the cup was terribly, un-Russianly small, and closing his eyes he slowly and feelingly drank out the tepid keroseney-smelling vodka.

The lieutenant coughed together with Lopakhin, as if sharing his pleasure with him, but he himself did not drink and put away the flask.

"What a difference in the men, eh, Lopakhin? Before, they used to fall flat and sniff the ground as soon as they caught sight of a plane but it's nothing like that now. Just keep a decent altitude above us or you're liable to break a leg, eh? Isn't that so, Lopakhin?"

"Right you are, Comrade Lieutenant."

"The lieutenant-colonel just rang up and asked who downed that plane. The men said it was you, and as a matter of fact I saw it myself. Most likely you'll be recommended for decoration. Well, you'd better be off, we've got to be expecting an attack soon. See to it you don't let us down with regard to the tanks. Drop in on Borzykh and tell him from me that there's going to be heavy fighting and that we've got to stand fast, to the last ditch, as they say. Tell him I'm banking on him, and that I'm going over to the right flank now. The Germans seem to be at it tooth and nail with their raids, clearing a way for themselves to the crossing. . . We're going to have a hot time of it today, so keep your eyes peeled!"

Lopakhin turned back to his own trench, brick-red with pleasure and the vodka he had drunk, but when he came to tank-destroyer Borzykh's trench he wiped the smile from his lips and assumed a serious mien.

Borzykh was having his breakfast and assiduously mopping the inside of a can with a crust of bread.

Lopakhin crouched down at the side of the trench and asked:

"How're tricks, my Siberian? Even the bombs don't get you, eh?"

"Nothing'll get me, all the same,

until I die," replied the broad-shouldered well-built Siberian in a bass voice, without stopping what he was doing.

"I say, you ought to treat me to some of your Siberian buns. After all I've come on a visit to you."

"You go visit my wife in Omsk, today's Sunday and she's sure to be making buns. She'll treat you all right."

Lopakhin shook his head sadly.

"It's kind of far, I won't go. To hell with it and with your buns too. . ."

"Yes, it is farish, all the same," said Borzykh with a sigh, and it was impossible to make out whether this faint sigh appertained to the great distance from this bare Don steppe to his native Omsk, or to the fact that the can had been emptied so quickly. . .

Effortlessly, Borzykh flicked the emptiness can into the weeds, painstakingly wiped his hands on his greasy trousers, and said:

"Better treat me to a bit of tobacco, Lopakhin."

"Don't tell me you've smoked up all your own!" exclaimed Lopakhin with amazement.

"Why smoked up? Another man's tobacco always tastes better," said Borzykh judiciously, and screwing up a bit of paper, he put his hand out of the trench. "Fork some out, and don't be stingy. Now if I'd had the good luck to bag a plane I'd shell out all my tobacco to my pals. . ."

After they had taken two or three puffs of the harsh makhorka smoke in silence, Lopakhin said:

"The lieutenant ordered me to tell you to keep your eyes peeled. He's got a head on his shoulders, that chap has, and he thinks the tanks 'll try their strength on us first. They've got a good place to concentrate, behind those hills opposite us, besides which they've got a good approach from there, hidden, a little gully going right through the hill. Did you see it?"

Borzykh nodded silently.

"Here's what the lieutenant said to me: 'I,' he says, 'am banking on Borzykh and on you, Lopakhin. We'll stand to the last.'"

"He's doing the right thing, banking on us," said Borzykh. "We haven't many men left, but all the same the chaps are tops. We'll hold out all right, but how about our neighbours?"

"Let our neighbours worry about themselves," said Lopakhin.

And again Borzykh nodded silently.

Rising to his feet, Lopakhin crushed the broad unyielding hand of his comrade and said:

"Best of luck, Akim!"

"Same to you."

When he had passed two infantry trenches and come up to the third, Lopakhin suddenly started and stopped short as if he had bumped into some unexpected obstacle, rubbed his eyes, and exclaimed indignantly through clenched teeth:

"Some business! That's all I needed to cap my old age..."

From a fox-hole that had been dug most properly and with obvious knowledge of the art of trench digging, from under a helmet pushed low on his forehead, unblinkingly, there stared at him the tired, but as ever passionless, cold blue eyes of Lissichenko, the cook. His full face with the plump, apple-like cheeks looked unusually young, even gay, and his blue eyes squinted at him calmly, and, as it seemed to Lopakhin, challengingly and brazenly.

Shuffling his feet deliberately, Lopakhin walked over to the trench, squatted at the edge, and looking down on the cook from above barked out in a voice that boded nothing good:

"Hello!"

"Hello to you," replied Lissichenko coldly.

"How you feeling?" enquired Lopakhin politely, withering the cook with a piercing glance and scarcely restraining the rage that was threatening to burst forth.

"Thank you kindly, and take yourself off a little further, to the devil."

"I would answer you in accordance with all the rules of military science, but it's not for you that I'm saving the most precious and rarest of words," said Lopakhin straightening up. "You just answer this one question: what idiot put you in this pit, and what do you think you'll hatch in this pit, and where's the kitchen, and what are we going to eat today thanks to your graciousness?"

"No one stuck me here, friend. I dug this trench for myself and put myself here on my own," replied Lissichenko in a calm, dreary voice.

Lopakhin all but choked with indignation.

"Put yourself here? Oh, you... And the kitchen?"

"The kitchen I left behind. And don't you go obing and ahing, if you please, and don't try to scare me. I got the blues hanging around the kitchen today and so I chucked it."

"Got the blues, chucked it, and came here of your own free will?"

"Exactly. Anything else you'd like to know, my hero?"

"What do you think anyway, that we can't hold out without you?" blurted out Lopakhin, still fixing Lissichenko with the same unblinking and invidious glare.

But it was not so easy to trip or even phase the hard-boiled cook, who had seen a thing or two in his day. Calmly glancing up at Lopakhin from below, he said:

"That's just it, you hit the nail on the head. I didn't depend on you, Lopakhin, thought you'd get shaky when it came to a pinch, and so I came."

"Well, why didn't you put on a white cap? The general's cook I saw had one on his head, clean as clean could be. Why didn't you put one on?" asked Lopakhin breathlessly.

"Why, that was the general's cook, but what would I be putting one on for?" asked Lissichenko warily, expecting a trap somewhere.

Lopakhin let himself go, exclaiming delightedly and with great gusto:

"You should have put one on, you fat turkey, so's you'd be killed quicker here!"

But Lissichenko merely waved his hand and replied as equably as ever:

"They'll kill me, Petya, only when the thistles are growing over your grave, when the ground beetle gives you its breast to suck, not before."

It was useless talking to the cook. He was as invulnerable in his good-natured Ukrainian calm as if he were sitting in a reinforced concrete pillbox, and so Lopakhin, drawing a breath, said softly and uncertainly:

"I'd sock you one with something heavy so's all the millet would come sprinkling out of you, but I don't want to waste my energy on such rubbish. You tell me first—and without any of your

wisecracks—what are we going to eat today?"

"*Shchi*."

"What?"

"*Shchi*, with fresh mutton and young cabbage."

Lopakhin had lost and was obviously having his leg pulled but he could not find words weighty enough for a fitting reply.

Crouching down again at the side of the trench, he called all his self-possession to his aid and began feelingly:

"Listen here, Lissichenko, I'm terribly nervous just now before the fight, and I'm sick and tired of your wisecracks. Talk sense: are you aiming to leave the men without any hot grub? Look out, the fellows won't forgive you that. I'm liable to be the first to open up at you point-blank, and to hell with what'll become of you then or what colour your mug'll be after that. Do you understand who you are anyway? The most important thing both in attack and in defence is grub and without grub any branch of the armed forces, it doesn't matter which, is like a zero with nothing in front of it. What are you hanging around here for? You better get out of here, old man, as quick as you can, before you're dragged out by the legs, get out, fix up your camouflage properly, and while every thing's quiet yet in the vicinity of the war cook your mush with as little smoke as you can manage. To hell with it, I'm even willing to eat your mush! It's worse without it than with. What are we anyway without hot food? We're just wretched creatures, I give you my word for it! Take me, for instance, without a hot mess I get to be more miserable than the very last Italian, worse than the lousiest Rumanian. My aim goes all cock-eyed and there's a kind of weakness in my legs and my hands start shaking... Go on, Lissichenko, and don't worry, we'll manage here without you too. I swear to you that your job is just as honourable as mine. Well, maybe it's something like a tenth part lower, but no more..."

Lopakhin waited for an answer, while Lissichenko slowly reached into his pocket and took out a pink tobacco pouch embroidered with impossible flowers, just as slowly tore a long slanting strip from a newspaper, and still more slowly began to twist it into a funnel. Only when he had filled it with ma-

khorka and lit up from a trophy cigarette lighter did he say in a leisurely tone:

"You're wasting your time trying to convince me, my hero. I can't swim across the Don with a kitchen on my back, it would drag me under right away, and it's just as impossible to get it across the bridge. I'll blow it up with a grenade when the time comes, and meanwhile a nice thick *shchi* is cooking away in the dixie. It's the truth I'm telling you. What are you popping your eyes out at me for like that? Pull them in a little, or bold on to them with your hands, they're liable to fall out. You see, it's like this: a bomb did for a couple of sheep near the bridge. Well, I, of course, cut the throat of one of the little dears, I couldn't let it die in agony from the splinters. Then I got some cabbage in a garden patch—sneaked them, I'll tell you straight. Well, and then I got two chaps who've been slightly wounded to keep an eye on the *shchi*, seasoned it, and went off, so that everything's OK at my end. Now I'm going to fight a bit, support you, fellows, and when the time comes for dinner, I'll crawl into the woods and hot grub will be delivered if possible. Satisfied with me, my hero?"

Very much moved, Lopakhin was about to embrace the cook, but the latter, smiling broadly, plumped down to the bottom of the trench and said:

"Instead of all these dog-like raptures you ought to give me a grenade, maybe it'll come in handy."

"My dear namesake! You're a jewel of a man! Fight away, I beg you, to your heart's content—I permit you!" exclaimed Lopakhin, solemnly unhooking a hand grenade from his belt and presenting it to the cook with a respectful bow.

Lopakhin would no doubt have spent a little more time bandying words with the cook, but once again the drone of approaching aeroplanes was heard, and he headed hastily for his own trench.

This time, too, the planes branched off on nearing the target: some of them directed their blows at the defence zone, while the rest, breaking through the AA barrage, bore down on the crossing.

Once again a thick cloud of brownish dust wreathed over the trenches like a fog, rising to a great height on the windless air and veiling the sun. Through

the roar of explosions, the wailing whistle of shrapnel and the dull thump of falling clods of earth, Lopakhin tried in vain to make out the shots of the AA guns. The battery in the school orchard was silent, and Lopakhin thought bitterly: "They covered it, the swine!" Then it suddenly occurred to him that perhaps the battery had managed to change its position and he calmed down somewhat.

In the infernal din that filled the air, he could hardly make out what Sashka was shouting. Deafened and crushed by the hurricane of explosions raging over the ground, he nevertheless mustered up the necessary strength, and tearing himself away from the wall of the trench, he frequently but cautiously glanced over the breastwork. The hot impacts of the blasts caused by the explosions beat at his head, but still he peered eagerly through the curtain of dust in front of him, trying to make out whether the enemy tanks were approaching under cover of the air attack.

During one such moment he happened to glance through the darkness pierced by the flames of explosions and the veiled sun in the direction of Zvyagintsev's trench and saw with relief and joy the barrel of a rifle raised aloft and trembling the least bit just after a shot and then caught a fleeting glance of Zvyagintsev's helmet, with the familiar dent in the side, thickly covered with dust and now completely devoid of the dull gloss of the khaki paint that had covered it.

"He's a real brick, that chap is," thought Lopakhin enthusiastically. "There's no scaring him with any music..."

Lopakhin's apprehensions soon justified themselves. The aeroplanes were just turning after the second sweep when the sound of motors was heard coming from the hill. But this time the sound was quite different, close to the ground, continuous and intermingled with the clanking and jangling of caterpillar tracks. Almost simultaneously the German artillery opened fire on the crossing from the reverse slope of the hill and our batteries, in the wood on the other side of the Don gave answer.

"Now, then, Sashka, pull up your pants and stand pat!" said Lopakhin with an encouraging smile. "And see to it that

not a single tankman gets away when I send their machine up in flames. How're you feeling? No so bad? Fine and dandy! The main thing in our injurious profession is to keep smiling!"

He bent down to his gun, and once again, as in that moment when the enemy plane had come diving at the trench, he seemed to merge with his inordinately long gun, his eye fixed steadily on the thundering steel boxes that were pushing through the thinning curtain of dust from the hill, forming a sort of blunt wedge.

No, this time he could breath freely! The beginning of this engagement was nothing like the battle when the remnants of the mauled regiment had succeeded in defending the height and repulsing the onslaught of the enemy with only four anti-tank guns and a few machine-guns in all. This time the battle was developing quite differently. The tanks had not gone more than half the distance to the aiming point Lopakhin had fixed on when a black palisade of explosions rose in their path. The regimental artillery had opened fire so briskly and efficiently that in a short time, of the twenty medium tanks that had come pushing out from behind the hill three had come to a complete standstill, while a fourth had not advanced even ten metres, dragging a black trail of smoke behind it, when the next shell raised a shaggy column of earth on its starboard side, and it lightly and obediently keeled over, just as if it were trying to scoop up with the edge of its mangled turret the bountiful, black Don soil which only several minutes earlier it had so disdainfully crushed under its tracks...

In a transport of delight with the work of the gunnery, Lopakhin squeezed Sashka's shoulder in a pincer-like grip.

"Some firing!" he exclaimed. "Just look at that for shooting! Ah, mama's babies that they are, whoever taught them? I'd kiss the crown of that man's head! Look here, Sashka, if this keeps up you and me may be out of a job today!..."

From a small orchard on the left flank, the anti-tank battery also opened fire on the tanks. Two more tanks were wrecked within a few minutes, but the others succeeded in pushing ahead and were already no more than two hundred metres away from the trenches.

Lopakhin distinctly saw the dark-grey squat body of one tank that was advancing a little to the side, saw, too, the dim outlines of a sort of outlandish, tailed monster daubed in white enamel on the side, just left of the cross. His inflamed, tearing eyes saw everything but he waited for the distance to decrease at least another fifty metres so that his shot would hit home without fail.

The grey dust streamed forth from under the caterpillars of the tank just above the ground and spread over the low steppe worm-wood. From time to time the polished track glinted suddenly in the sun, and then again the dust would curl out like grey cotton-wool dragging after the tank. Above it, Lopakhin could see the turret revolve slowly, while a pale sharp spurt of flame, almost invisible in the rays of the bright morning sun, shot out from the muzzle of the cannon for a brief instant like a forked tongue and disappeared, after which on the right flank of the company, behind and in front of the yellow mounds of the trenches, black mushrooms rose into the air and settled down slowly, accompanied by the characteristic metallic bursting sound of explosions.

Lopakhin got the tank with his second bullet. Almost simultaneously two more tanks flared up. . . The others turned abruptly and beat a retreat behind the hill. And only when the last tank had disappeared behind the dusty crest did Lopakhin turn his flashing eyes towards Kopytovsky's pale face.

"What's up, Sashenka?" he asked briefly. "You've gone kind of grey around the gills?"

"Such a life is enough to make anyone grey," replied Kopytovsky with a heavy intake of breath.

Half an hour later the Germans launched another attack. This time about a dozen German panzers, accompanied by tommy-gunners, tried to force a breach in the defences at the hinge of the two companies, one of which was under Lieutenant Goloshchokov's command.

The blow fell on the left flank of Goloshchokov's company. The leading tank, a medium, ran straight into the wattled, clay-daubed collective-farm smithy, disappearing in dust for an instant and coming out of the ruins with rubble and

twigs all over its armour. It wiped out the crew of a heavy machine-gun with its cannon fire and succeeded in crushing several infantry bunkers. . . It advanced in zigzags, flattening out the trenches under its caterpillars, turning its blunt grey snout here and there. It was fast approaching Lopakhin, and when it suddenly braked one caterpillar on top of Corporal Kochetygov's trench and began to swing round and round on one spot in an attempt to cave in the deep trench, Lopakhin fired. But it was not he who wrecked the tank. Up to his chest in the earth that had come showering into the trench the already dying corporal reached up, and as soon as the tank slid off his ruined trench, waved his hand with a weak, childish motion. A bottle tinkled faintly against the grey armour of the tank, unheard in the thunder of the battle, and flew into tiny splinters while flames and curly light blue smoke began to creep rapidly over the armour. . .

With its motor screaming as if in intolerable pain, the burning tank turned at a right angle and made for the orchard, trying to beat out the flames against the fire-scarred branches of the dense cherry trees.

Blinded and half-smothered by the smoke, the driver was evidently unable to see for the tank rushed at an empty, disused well at full speed, hit the stone wall, careered over on its side, and raising its blackened bottom, from which the fumes of burning oil emanated, stopped stockstill in that position, impotent, awaiting its destruction. . . Its left caterpillar was still spinning round at a furious rate, vainly trying to get a grip on the ground with its glistening treads, but the sagging right caterpillar hung helplessly and forlornly over the ploughed-up ground.

All this Kopytovsky saw. Breathing in hurried gasps, his eyes wide open, he followed the frenzied movements and destruction of the enemy tank, and came to himself only when the familiar sound of Lopakhin's rifle cracked over his ear. Turning his head to the right with a rapid bird-like motion, Kopytovsky saw a tank advancing in uneven, tremulous spurts some hundred metres away from the trench, halting almost immediately, and close up against him, almost at his side, the crimson, strange face of Lopakhin.

Two German tankmen jumped out of the hatch of the halted panzer like grey shadows. One of them, in a jacket open at the throat, toppled over on his back and then turned over abruptly, flinging his arms out crosswise. The second, hatless, dark-haired, in a grey shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, tried to get to his knees but suddenly fell flat again, hugging the ground with his whole body, and began to wriggle away like a snake, practically without moving his arms. . .

Just then Kopytovsky, who had been too slow in the take up, felt someone wrest the tommy-gun from his hands. Lopakhin, never removing his fascinated eyes from the crawling tankman, raised Kopytovsky's tommy-gun to his shoulder just as a lone shot cracked out on the right, from Zvyagintsev's trench. The crawling tankman buried his nose in the ground. Lopakhin lowered his gun and turned a rage-distorted face to

Kopytovsky, sucking in the air between his clenched teeth with a whistle and stammering as he said:

"You. . . bastard, piece of junk that you are! . . . Are you fighting or what?! Why don't you fire on time? Are you waiting until he starts surrendering?! Get him before he manages to raise his hands! Get him on the wing! I don't need a captured German on my territory, I need him here dead, get me, you, mama's boy?! . . ."

The sun had already risen high over the shell-torn earth in the fair blue sky and the fragrance of the sun-warmed steppe worm-wood was even sharper, bitterer and dearer to the heart, when from behind the mist-shrouded hills of the Don, tanks made their appearance again and the German infantry again advanced in a third, fruitless attack.

Translated by Elizabeth Donnelly

LEO SLAVIN

THE MAN FROM THE URALS

Have you ever had occasion to make a trip round the traffic control points on a military road? As you get nearer the front they have a simpler look about them: instead of the fancy, striped barriers across the road there is nothing but freshly hewn beams; instead of the comfortable booths that house the traffic control personnel—tent-like shelters of interwoven branches. There are very few traffic signs and the placards drawn by the artists of the road transport service have not yet been put up.

The traffic control, however, is just as strict, and the traffic regulators just as smart. The traffic here is perhaps even greater than at the control points further back. You can see many people sitting on the grassy banks by the roadside waiting for a lift. Amongst them are officers transferred to other units, men with light wounds waiting for the chance to report to the field hospital and quartermasters burdened by their eternal worry of how to fill the army's gigantic belly.

In these days of the advance through the Smolensk Region you are certain to see a few old women amongst them carrying what is left of their belongings: ragged, coloured blankets, an oil lamp without a chimney and the inevitable goat on a string. The old women are returning to their native villages which have just been liberated from the Germans. Their faces are puffed with crying and filled with a happy perplexity.

All these people travel by hitch-hiking, or "voting" as it is called here, a name which this method of travelling got from the way people raise their hand to stop a passing vehicle.

The traffic regulator examined my documents.

"Won't you take an officer with you? He's bound for the same place. . ."

A minute later a stalwart guardsman with a bag in his hand clambered groaning into my car.

"Oh, my leg, my poor old leg!" he muttered.

That thick, heavy bass voice seemed strangely familiar to me and I turned to look at him. What I saw was a combination of grey hair, a young face, an upturned nose and round spectacles.

"Denis Chertorogov!" I exclaimed.

"Myself!" he answered and grasped my hand firmly.

"So you. . ." I shouted and then stopped in confusion.

"No, I didn't die," he rumbled encouragingly.

He was not wearing the private's shoulder straps that I had seen on his tunic nine months ago at Sinyavino, but those of a lieutenant. On his breast he wore two orders, but in other respects he had not changed. The same commanding smoothness in his movements, the same stately reserve in his face. And there, amongst his gleaming wolf fangs the same black hole in place of a tooth that had been knocked out during a fist fight fought according to the rules of what is known in the Urals as "salazki"—tobogganing.

"What are you now?"

"Deserter," he answered and laughed, "deserter in the opposite direction."

"Run away from hospital back to the front?"

"Exactly. What are you looking at me like that for? Still don't believe I'm alive? As a matter of fact there was a day. . ."

The ring of the spades was still in my ears from that time when we dug a common grave in the frozen earth on the shores of Lake Ladoga. That was during those unforgettable days when we broke through the ring around Leningrad. Chertorogov's long body lay on the edge of that grave. Apparently people are only telling the truth when they say that people are resurrected as well as killed at the front.

I remember the morning of that day, a misty January dawn. Reinforcements composed of new recruits had arrived at battalion headquarters. Not far away the fighting for "Workers' Settlement No. 5" was going on. The never-silent guns of the Volkhov front were firing into the ring of German fortifications. The new recruits looked dumbfounded at the flaming horizon. Some showed

their excitement in an excessive striving to appear calm. Only one was naturally imperturbable, and that was Denis Chertorogov, a tall grey-haired lad. His powerful cheekbones, the haughty lines of his mouth, his unblinking eyes and the black rings of his spectacles gave him the appearance of a huge, strong bird.

He was not of the talkative kind. From his great height he looked down condescendingly and, one might say, idly, on the people around him. The other fellows had great difficulty in dragging a word out of him, but they discovered that he had been born grey-headed and he had injured his eyes by too much reading at the university. He added briefly that he was an astronomer. He wore purple-coloured puttees that reached only to the calf. A worn wooden spoon stuck out of the left puttee. The remainder of his legs was clothed in quilted trousers, carefully patched in several places. There was frost on the ground but Chertorogov did not, apparently, feel cold. His shaggy fur cap was perched on the back of his head. You would have to scour the world a long time to find another astronomer as unacademic in appearance as this one.

In the Urals foothills there is a salt lake named Sharkal which the local people call the Little Sharkal Sea. On its northern bank stands the village of Cheremshanovo. The inhabitants of this village have from time immemorial been engaged in fishing, bear taming and reindeer trapping. They are all massively built people, shoulders as broad as a house, deep chested, and taking size 12 in boots.

The powerful physique, reticent character and pure Urals pride is handed down from generation to generation. A real Cheremshanovo villager thinks it undignified for a grown-up man to be astonished by anything. Their usual expression in the most extraordinary circumstances is: "Well, what's peculiar about that?"—accompanied by a careless shrug of the shoulders.

Bored with hunting and the tiring job of spearing sturgeon in winter, the fifteen-year-old Denis joined an artel (gang) of charcoal burners. There was a liveliness in Denis' character which could only be observed when he was in company with his slow-moving fellow

countrymen. The charcoal-burners lived in the woods almost all the year round. Charcoal burning is a fine art, the secrets of which are handed down in several Cheremshanovo families from father to son. Life around the never-dying fires was filled with deep poetry for an imaginative lad. The stars that shone down through the branches of the cedars had a powerful attraction for Denis. He noticed the three diamonds of Orion and wanted to know what they were called. Once every six months the artel selected two envoys who went to the town to collect wages for them all. Like the gold prospectors they were paid in gold. They bought salt, flour, bacon, vodka, tobacco and sugar and then disappeared into the forest for another six months.

It once happened that Denis was one of the two envoys chosen. He never returned to the forest but remained in the town and went to school.

The villagers of Cheremshanovo are a good, solid people with fixed customs. A number of archaic words have been retained in their speech; you can tell them immediately by their unmistakable "cho" instead of "shto" (what) and by the peculiar interrogative intonation of their speech. As far as outward appearance goes you can never confuse the Cheremshanovo villager with anybody else on account of his reticent and unruffled imperturbability.

Nevertheless by 1941 Cheremshanovo had provided the country with seven engineers, five geologists, five doctors, an astronomer and a specialist in Romance poetry of the early Middle Ages. A technical school for the fish industry made its appearance in the village, followed by two cinemas, a local natural history museum and quite a decent library.

When the National War began the men of Cheremshanovo joined the army. Most of them served in reconnaissance units and soon won distinction, displaying in battle that gloomy zeal so characteristic of the Urals people. Those who saw the regiments composed of Urals men in the battle for Moscow will never forget the silent ferocity with which they went into attack or stormed a position. Their relatives who remained in the rear areas devoted their energies to casting guns and machining shells.

The people of the Urals may not please everybody at first, on account of their gloomy way of going about things. Denis Chertorogov was like this.

The veterans of the company were of the opinion that Denis was too self-confident for a young soldier. Experienced soldiers gave him instructions: the ground-sheet should be folded this way and not the way he did it; detonators for hand grenades ought to be carried in the haversack and not in his pocket mixed up with keys, fish-hooks and pocket telescopes. Denis carried out all instructions swiftly and accurately but with an air of independence that seemed to imply that he knew all that before, although in actual fact he made as many mistakes in the details of army life as any other young soldier.

Each hour is different to the one before at the front. The day before had been calm enough, but recruit Chertorogov's first day turned out to be a noisy one. At one go he got a full measure of all the war had to give. There was an air raid as soon as he joined the unit.

Everybody sprang into the slit trenches. The earth came tumbling down, there were clouds of black smoke overhead and the wounded were screaming in the haze. Ignati Nekrassov, an old soldier, grasped Denis by the hand.

"Bit awful first time, isn't it?" he said softly.

The recruit shrugged his shoulders slightly and then grunted in a haughty and lazy tone:

"Well, what's peculiar about that?"

Nekrassov turned away. He was stunned by this bravado in the face of death.

After the air raid the recruits were posted to companies. Denis was put in Nekrassov's section. Nekrassov gathered his men together and took them to join the platoon, passing on the way through a grove of trees torn up by shells. The men stumbled along over the ice crust. There was a frosty haze in the air, and behind the hill there was a fire.

"That's Settlement Number 5 burning," said Nekrassov.

"Are the Germans there?" asked someone.

"For the moment they are," said Nekrassov.

"It's cold," said one of the soldiers blowing on his frozen fingers.

"In about an hour we're going to storm the settlement, you'll get warmed up then, sonny," said Nekrassov.

Everybody laughed.

At midday two scouts from the Leningrad front arrived in the company lines. They were sailors and had made their way through the German lines. One of them was small and lively and the other tall with a flabby face. He gnawed at a rusk all the time. The soldiers swarmed round the lads from the famous Leningrad divisions.

"We thought you were farther away. You're doing well on the Volkhov front, advancing fine," said the lively-looking scout.

He told them that the Leningrad troops had also advanced during the night. Both fronts were moving like a press between whose jaws the ring of German besiegers was being crushed. The troops began questioning the sailors. Some of the soldiers were from Leningrad and they wanted to know what the city looked like and what had been damaged. The lively sailor answered them in detail.

"What's happened to the Pulkovo Observatory?" asked Chertorogov.

That was the first question he had asked that day.

"Ruined," said the lively little sailor, "the swine destroyed everything there was. The instruments, of course, were evacuated. They were saved."

"And the library?"

"Burnt," answered the sailor, "completely burnt."

"Burnt!" exclaimed Chertorogov. "What a misfortune!"

The sailor stared in amazement at the tall recruit in the purple puttees and glasses.

"He's an astronomer," somebody explained, "works amongst the stars so to speak."

"Burnt, comrade astronomer," repeated the lively sailor. "I know all about it because we had a man from Pulkovo in our company. He was pretty old. Semnikhin was his name. Do you remember him, Gavril? He was a tough fighter, Semnikhin—he fought like a wild beast. And he wasn't young either—he was over forty."

"Where is he now?" asked Chertorogov.

"Dead, comrade astronomer," answered the lively sailor.

"He was taken prisoner," suddenly said the tall sailor in a high-pitched voice that seemed to have grown wild from such long silence. "A Hun officer found out who he was and said: 'Hoist the astronomer up nearer the stars!' The swine! . . . Lineikin, you've still got some rusks left, haven't you?"

"I've still got some," answered the other pulling a rusk out of his haversack. "They're good rusks but a bit wet, had to lie down in a swamp and all the rusk got spoilt."

"Well, what happened to him?" shouted Chertorogov impatiently.

"To whom?" asked the short sailor.

"Oh, the astronomer! He already had the rope round his neck, but he looked the Germans straight in the eye till the very end and, what's more, he spat in their ugly mugs. We took the village later on and the people told us all about it. He was a desperate fellow!"

That same day Chertorogov found himself in a tight corner. Shallow trenches zigzagged between peat bogs. The thick mud here never froze however intense the cold. A light steamy mist hung over it. The damp frost penetrated to the very bone. The German artillery suddenly opened fire. The trenches had only just been dug and there were no blindages. Imitating the others Denis pressed his enormous body against the front wall of the trench from which black mud immediately began to ooze out. Fountains of mud and fire sprang up where the shells fell. By closing your eyes you could avoid seeing them but there was no way to avoid hearing them, even if you pulled the fur ear-flaps of your cap down and then pressed on them with both fists as hard as you could. Still the thunderous explosions of the shells penetrated through the walls of your skull making them seem so fragile. There was only one thing you could think of—where would the next shell fall? Soon this thought had no further meaning for the shells came over in large numbers falling in front, behind and on all sides.

Ignati Nekrassov reached out for Chertorogov's hand. The recruit turned towards him a face that looked pale even through the black mud. Nekrassov put his arm round Denis' shoulder.

"Well, how d'you like it, lad? Bit 33

quicker in front of the stove at home. Isn't it?" he said.

A 106 mm shell struck the low breastwork. The whistling fragments flew in every direction carrying heat and mud. The two soldiers crouched still lower in the liquid-ice shelter. Without getting up from his place, Nekrassov heard Chertorogov's rasping but stubborn voice: "Well, what's peculiar about that?"

Chertorogov went into the attack with the others. It was just four hours since the new recruits had arrived at the front. He did not understand what was going on. He didn't know where they were running, whose shells were flying overhead and why the rockets had been let off. True, everything had been explained to him, but the explanations had escaped his memory under the unusual circumstances in which he found himself. He ran forward as the others did and caught sight of the back of Ignati Nekrassov's head with its sharp soldierly outlines in front of him. He was more afraid of losing touch with that head than of anything else. As he ran he jumped across some rails. He was surprised that the rails were so narrow that he stepped across them without even lengthening his stride. Then he realized that they were narrow-gauge railway lines. They ran in all directions. In some places there were no rails, only embankments. Under one of these embankments Denis ran into a German. He knew it was a German because he flew at him. Denis brought the German down but did not stop, so afraid was he of losing touch with Nekrassov's head. As he ran he straightened his glasses which had slipped forward on his nose and kept on running forward between the remains of houses, through lines of chimney stacks standing naked and unadorned.

Knowing that you have to shout "Hurrah" during an attack, Denis shouted "Hurrah." He did not notice that everybody, including himself, was lying down, and as he lay there he kept on shouting, a single, lonely voice, shouting "Hurrah," until somebody's black hand that smelt of moisture and powder was placed over his mouth. He recognized Ignati.

Then they ran forward again. The sailors, Liseikin and the tall Gavrilka kept up with the soldiers. A note sent along the line by the political instructor fell

into Denis' hands: it said that their company had heroically stormed and entered the workers' settlement and was now driving out the Germans. Then it was that Denis remembered that the German he had run into had bitten him in the hand. He looked round for the embankment where the German had fallen. The embankment, however, was hidden from his view by a row of overturned trucks. He glanced at his bayonet. It was covered in blood that had already turned to ice and was hanging in tiny red icicles. Denis noticed that it was getting harder to run and realized that they were going uphill. Not far away he saw a longish hill with ruins on top of it. They were shooting from the hill and he could see the embrasures in the German bunkers, darker than the surrounding earth.

Nekrassov, still running ahead, suddenly stooped down and took the steel helmet from a soldier who had fallen. Then he turned to Denis, took off the latter's fur cap and put the helmet on his head. He stuck the fur cap in Denis' belt.

"Don't lose the cap," he muttered.

The cold metal burned Denis' head. He took out his handkerchief and put it on his head under the helmet tying the ends below his chin.

Following the others Denis leapt into a trench. It was deeper than ours, and here, between the boarded walls of the trench, he saw his second German right in front of him. The German knocked Denis' rifle out of his hands with a blow from his rifle-butt. Denis dropped to the ground and as he did so heard a rifle shot over his head. The German stepped over him and ran on farther, apparently thinking Denis was dead. Denis got up, took his rifle and went in another direction along a narrow corridor which had many bends in it and was frequently crossed by other corridors.

Shouts and shots came from round the corner, but here where he was it was quiet and deserted. Denis ran round the corner but the fighting was already over. The blindage they had blown up was still smoking. The soldiers clambered out of the trench, Denis with them.

It seemed that all the Germans had been driven away. Suddenly, from one flank, a machine-gun began firing. Several men fell and the remainder lay down. The firing came from a blockhouse

that they had not noticed before. The moment anybody attempted to get up the machine-gun began to rattle away. Time passed without any action, our troops lying pressed to the ground. Everybody realized that this was disastrous for the general advance on this sector.

Suddenly the men lying there saw the figure of a single soldier, bent low, running zigzag towards the blockhouse. Occasionally he dropped to the ground, then he got up and ran forward again. Again he dropped to the earth and crawled. Then he ran on at full height. The soldiers recognized the new recruit Chertorogov, his long legs in their purple puttees, his glasses, his handkerchief under his helmet. It was horrible watching the way he ran to meet the bullets. Still he ran on covered with the light, impenetrable armour of his good luck. A few steps from the blockhouse he dropped to the ground and crawled forward, then leaping to his feet threw three grenades into the embrasure of the blockhouse and collapsed.

The blockhouse was silent. The troops all jumped to their feet and ran forward.

Denis, riddled with bullets, lay beside the blockhouse he had blown up. His eyes were closed but he was still alive and heard the trampling of feet and shouting. There was a terrible pain in his chest. He tried to shout, to call for help. He had not sufficient strength to shout and it only made his chest hurt worse. He wanted to open his eyes but was afraid that the effort would kill him. Nevertheless, mustering all his strength he did open his eyes.

He saw the sky. The three diamonds of Orion shone over his head. Old friends had come to bid him farewell! He blinked his eyelids in greeting and the stars blinked in response. Tears of joy ran down his face on which lay the splintered glasses. He saw well-known paths and secluded corners in the heavens. It seemed to him that he had won the heavens and not the earth from the Germans, the low friendly heavens of his childhood. The accursed Germans had seized it and he had driven them out of his native heavens. And his friends the stars, the three brilliant Orion boys came down lower and lower, winking and whispering: "Yes, that's him, our lad from the

forest." It was astonishing how big the stars could get, as big as heads.

They really were heads, the heads of the bewhiskered Ignati Nekrassov, of Lineikin, of the sleepy Gavril and many others. When he was sure that they really were people and not stars, Chertorogov mustered all the strength that was left in his body in order to give an expression of imperturbability to his poor, bloody face. He groaned from the effort.

His comrades thought that he was asking for something and one after another asked him:

"D'you want a drink, Chertorogov?"

"Perhaps you aren't lying comfortably? Can we turn you over?"

"Leave him alone," said Ignati Nekrassov. "There's nothing more he needs."

He wiped his eyes with his fist and then spoke in a loud voice as though he hoped that his words would penetrate Chertorogov's insensibility:

"Chertorogov, my dear friend! If you hear me, then know that all your comrades are round you, the whole Third Platoon. And know that you are our hero and that we are all proud of you who did not begrudge your young life for your country. . . ."

Denis shuddered. Everybody was silent, and in the silence they heard Denis whisper:

"What's peculiar. . . about. . ."

He did not finish the sentence but lay silent.

The soldiers looked at one another and removed their steel helmets.

"A desperate fellow," said Lineikin. "A real astronomer. It's a pity but there's no sea without water and no war without blood."

They laid Chertorogov on a greatcoat and marching in step carried him to the grave.

That was where I saw him the last time. It was Denis' fifth hour at the front. Not far away, under the hill, the troops of the Volkhov and Leningrad fronts embraced one another, united at last. I went on without waiting for Denis' burial. . . .

. . . And now he was sitting in the car beside me calmly telling me the whole story in his rumbling bass:

"My constitution is a real Urals one. When they began to carry me to the grave I groaned. So I had to leave the grave for the Medical Battalion. I had a lot of holes in me but they were not mortal.

They plugged me up in hospital and I'm pretty much the same as I was before, whole and smooth. A little more talkative, perhaps. Probably some of my wild ways have seeped out through those holes. I should have gone back to my unit, but I have grown since, as you see. I have been on all sorts of jobs since then. But still, I shall never forget the day when I ran towards the blockhouse under the rain of bullets. It's a feeling all of its own, you know. What is more I had never been under fire before. The first day was. . ."

"Did you realize that you were doing a wonderful thing at the time?"

"My mind sort of knew it. But still it was terrifying. At that time I thought that a real hero should not be afraid. So I felt I was a kind of imposter who had got into the wonderful land of great deeds by false pretences, you understand?"

"You did not show that you were afraid. You had a calm and careless look about you, I remember."

"Pride. Fear of fear is stronger than fear of death. Urals pride. . . We'll soon be getting to our place."

We turned into the woods and drove along a wooden road, "duckboards" as we call them here. The car jolted over the logs and Chertorogov frowned. Apparently his leg was making itself felt. He did not complain and only once, when the jolt was especially severe, muttered through clenched teeth:

"A hell of a road! . . ."

I suggested that we should go slower.

"No, no," protested Chertorogov, "I'm in a hurry. I'm getting some reinforcements today, that's why I ran away from hospital before time. We are on the offensive and new recruits have to be led into battle in a special way. A lot depends on this as I know from my own experience. So let's go a little faster, please."

The road twisted and the trees came down to the edge. In these parts of Smolensk the woods are as thick as at Briansk. There was a strong scent of pine needles. At last Chertorogov shouted:

"Stop! We've arrived. Driver, take the car over there, under cover."

Chertorogov walked swiftly along a path, limping slightly. The sentry standing under a tree with a rifle at his side, greeted him.

"Hallo, Kashkin!" said Chertorogov.

36 "Have the reinforcements arrived?"

"They've just come, Comrade Lieutenant. Congratulations on your recovery," said the sentry, smiling but still standing to attention.

We went farther into the wood. Then came the sound of a German reconnaissance aircraft. Chertorogov lifted up his head with a troubled look on his face. Through the trees we could see a Heinshel. Chertorogov swore.

"There's a trench to your right, Comrade Lieutenant," said the sentry.

We got into the trench. We heard the explosions of demolition bombs and the crash of falling trees. The blasts caused us to sway on our feet. Somebody coughed up above us. We lifted our heads and saw a soldier standing there, a well-built youngster leaning against a stumpy oak-tree. He saluted, looking down at us. Perhaps this was what made me see a shade of laughter in his eyes. His loose belt and a collar that was much too big for him told us that he was one of the recruits.

"Why don't you take cover? Get into the trench!" shouted Chertorogov angrily.

The youngster slowly came down into the trench.

"What's your name?" asked Chertorogov sharply.

"Diomid Pyanov," answered the lad gloomily.

"Where are you from?"

We did not hear the answer. A terrible roar nearby shook the forest. The thick oak under which the recruit had been standing split and crashed down.

"D'you see that?" asked Chertorogov, sternly. "I suppose this is your first air raid?"

Diomid Pyanov turned his slightly pale face towards him and said drily:

"What's peculiar about that?"

"Oho!" cried Chertorogov and looked penetratingly at the recruit.

The latter shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"What a hero!" muttered Chertorogov fixing the youngster with a look that had both anger and tenderness in it.

I also looked at the recruit, and from his huge hands calmly folded on a mighty chest, from his haughty, calm, high cheek-boned face, from the sombre flash of courage in his narrow eyes I recognized the immortal and invincible clan of the proud people of the Urals.

THE OLD FISHERMAN

I was on my way back from reconnoitering nights running. I was wandering in a thicket so dense that, as the saying has it, a bird couldn't carry a berry out of it. My sheepskin cap pulled low over my eyes. I forced my way through the fallen trees and dark ravines. The rich foliage of the grove completely shut out the sky, and only the sun-beams playing on the trunks, and the warm smell of rotting leaves betrayed the fact that it was midday.

It seemed there would be no end to the forest. But at last it grew lighter ahead of me and the air was fresher, there must be a big river somewhere about. Half an hour later, I was pulling off my boots, preparatory to swimming across it. The snapping of a twig nearby made me turn round. A tall old man with stooping shoulders was strolling along the grass-grown bank. Parting the bushes he peered into the creeks starred with water-lilies.

Seizing an overhanging bough, the old man bent down and with a sudden shiver flopped into the river. Soon his shaggy head emerged from under water and he threw out a silvery roach onto the bank. Then he brushed some yellowish water-weeds off his back and dived again. This time he stayed a bit longer, and fished out a moderate-sized catfish.

"Good afternoon!" I said.

The old man slowly turned his head, and fixed me with a long, mistrustful stare. But I succeeded in loosening his tongue.

"God preserve you," he said; and a kindly smile softened the hard lines of his face.

"Have you got 'em on a string down there?" I asked pointing to the roach.

"Knowing how—keeps everything on a string," he returned quietly, and pulling on his shirt, added with a deep sigh: "Neither boats nor nets did those villains leave us."

"Then why do you wear yourself out here? Why not come to us? No one would grudge you the bit of bread you eat and you'll have a roof over your head."

"I know, sonny, kind hearts are never scarce in our land, but. . ." He hesitated, then sidled up to me and whisper-

ed: "I'll tell you what. . . I've been wronged, deeply wronged by them. It'd be sinful to die feeling so wronged. . . Over there"—he went on with a jerk of his head in the direction of the other bank—"I'd be a burden, just one more old man that death's forgotten. . . But here I may be of use still: my eyes are good and my ears hearing's all right. Why, the other day I came across another like you." The fisherman half closed his eyes, and all the wrinkles on his face became animated. "Didn't I give him a full account of the nazi's whereabouts and their numbers, and of the ways their tanks had passed and how many of them? . . ."

Thus I made the acquaintance of Vassili Zhiga, an old fisherman from the collective farm at the village of Klimovka.

Our sappers, working in the vicinity of the river, were suddenly shelled by German guns. The sappers collected a few splinters and by those samples we found out that the Germans had brought down long-range artillery.

We failed to check up the enemy's firing positions: they were too skilfully camouflaged.

Then, in response to the commanding officer's call, a number of men volunteered to reconnoiter the depth of the enemy's defence.

When night came, I started off dressed as a peasant and swam the river.

For several days I hung about the villages occupied by the Germans; I would spend long hours lying like a stone among the stones on the bottom of a gully, or like the trees blown down on the outskirts of a hamlet, or a dead bough on a tree: even the birds were deceived; but it was all to no purpose. I got nowhere. And meanwhile I was running out of hard-tack and felt very bad.

Then I remembered the old fisherman. The first reluctant daylight found me at his house behind the familiar hillock.

From time to time the wind brought to me the drowsy voices of the sentries. The mist was beginning to disperse. 37

I urged myself on, my chafed knees and elbows bled.

How glad the old fellow was to see me! All the good-natured wrinkles in his face lit up with a smile.

I told him briefly what had brought me here. By way of reply the old man pointed through the window: "Look there!"

I did. The mist was drifting away, revealing blind alleys and narrow yards where the trees had been cut down. Behind the threshing barn, on a sodden by-road, lay a horse apparently dying of starvation. Raising its head it watched the rare passers-by with a kind of resignation. A little way off there was another horse, dead: crows unhesitatingly alighted on it. Still further on, big hayricks darkened here and there on the brownish common.

Still, no matter where I looked I saw nothing worthy of notice. What was the idea? Why should the old man tell me to look into the street I wondered as I left the window.

With a ghost of a smile, the old man asked me:

"Queer, isn't it?"

"You'll see things, a lot queerer yet. These are your horses, I suppose, but the hay belongs to the Germans."

I couldn't very well keep irritation out of my voice: I suspected he was dodging my own affairs and talking about things that had nothing to do with them.

"It's just the other way about," he retorted briskly, and coming closer he whispered: "It's the hay that's ours; the horses belong to the Germans."

"What are they up to, then?" I said.

"Ay, their horses are starving, yet our hay remains untouched. The Fritzes must have reasons of their own to be so mindful of our property. Well, sonny, can you make it out now?"

"I can. It means, the guns. . ."

"Are buried right under the hayricks," said the old man.

So that was how I learned the secret of the German battery—thanks to Vassili. It was simple and straight forward enough and would be good news to our artillery men. A few moments more and the haystacks were marked on the map. And now home!

"You'd better wait till it's dark,"

38 the fisherman suggested closing the

shutters. "Last night somebody knocked out one of their officers—who was after the women. They haven't found out who did it, so they're just wild. You'll have a job getting out of the place in the day-time."

But there was no time to be lost.

Hardly had I stepped out of the hut when a hullabaloo started all over the village: German soldiers were driving the villagers out of their houses.

I was looking about me for some sort of cover when I heard a shout just behind me:

"Where are you going, you, swine? Back with you!"

A scout is a sworn brother to danger, and can't be caught unawares. I stopped and turned round as casually as if I had heard a pal's voice.

Two Germans were behind me. They shouted and pointed with their rifles to make me understand I was to follow the crowd of villagers.

My hand went to my pocket before I had time to think about it; another second—and somewhere on the Rhine two more wives would have been widows. But I checked myself: I couldn't possibly kill all of them, and there was no escape. I had no right to die before handing our gunners the plan of the common and those haystacks.

Caution doesn't discredit pluck; it would never be too late to give up the ghost. At any rate, in a few hours' time, my life would cost the Germans more blood than now when they were boring me through with their pale eyes.

I trudged after the villagers.

We stood in the square where but a short time before the village folk probably used to keep their highdays and holidays. Here and there the legs of broken garden seats stuck out of the sodden ground.

Lost in the throng I couldn't see anything that was going on in front. Only groans and shrieks reached me. I threaded my way to the front and ran into the old fisherman.

His name was called out before we had time to speak to each other. The throng parted apprehensively to let him pass.

An ungainly officer asked the old man in a low voice:

"Who killed the German officer?"

"I don't know," answered Vassili Zhiga in the same low tone. The officer's heavy, cobble-like fist struck him in the face. Vassili Zhiga fell down, but got up at once.

The officer frowned: he was displeased with the old man getting up as quickly as that. He swung his arm and delivered another blow.

Vassili dropped on his right knee, then slowly fell on his side. A pool of blood was spreading on the spot where the old man's head had struck the ground.

This time, it was much more difficult for him to rise. Leaning on his elbows, and then, tottering like a baby just learning to walk, he stood up; he looked very old and infirm.

"Who killed the German officer?"

"I don't know."

And again the German knocked the old man down. . . .

. . . Vassili Zhiga was clutching at every little mound he could reach, clinging to stones and dry roots—to anything his fingers could get at—in his supreme effort to stand up.

With bated breath I was watching this extraordinary duel.

"Don't get up, grandad!" cried a woman in the crowd. But straining his every nerve, slowly as if he were creeping from under a heavy weight, Vassili Zhiga got up and stood erect: a loud sigh of relief escaped him. Our eyes met, and, hardly able to move his parched lips, he smiled.

In that smile was the dignity of one who had passed the hardest test, the supreme trial of his life.

I was sure the enraged officer would kill the old man on the spot. But all at once the German's fist unclashed and

he lighted a cigarette. Then he ordered the soldiers to line up the villagers.

Vassili Zhiga was next but two on my left. When I looked at him I recalled an old Georgian adage: "Let the dagger be made of wood, if only your heart be of steel."

The officer let his eye run along the lines.

"Every fifth man to be shot!"—and with this brief command he left the square.

. . . Every fifth man! As I looked to the right to make out my own number, I felt the man next to me drew away from my side, and understood that I happened to be one of the fifths.

The first of the doomed men, a tall middle-aged peasant, did not say a word. He only bent down and pulled up the tops of his high boots.

The soldiers fired. The tall peasant was killed and the soldiers went for the second victim.

Women burst out sobbing.

Mine was the next turn.

Suddenly I was pushed gently aside and somebody wedged in between number four and myself.

I looked round. . . Vassili Zhiga had taken my place.

"Keep still! You're expected over there," he whispered.

Before I shook off my bewilderment the soldiers quickly counted off four men and shot the fifth man, Vassili Zhiga, in the village square, lined with disused trenches.

Such was the death of the old fisherman, if, indeed, we can call this death.

Translated by N. Dvoretzkaya

AFTER THE BATTLE

(Stalingrad Notes)

The epos of the defence and restoration of Stalingrad will be added to the history of our country as one of its most brilliant chapters.

Boris Agapov's story, founded on fact, tells of the people who defended Stalingrad and who are now engaged in rebuilding the city. These

are people that have been brought up, educated and moulded by our country, a country that ushered in a new era in its history twenty-six years ago, a country of inspired builders, creators and fighters, a country of the gallant defenders of the October Revolution.

The wings of the aircraft keeled over as we flew above that same steppe that had but a short time before been the scene of stupendous battle. The whole surface of the earth was scarred with shell craters and seamed with trenches which zigzagged across the ground like the tracks of a mole or bark-beetle. Everywhere, as far as the eye could reach, were masses of German armoured vehicles, making black patches on the grey background of the earth. Their guns and their radiators were pointed towards the famous city, the steel corpses lay with their jowls pointed towards the stronghold which they failed to reduce. There are so many of them that it is difficult to imagine how they can be counted. All the gullies and dips are full of them. This was an army which not only had the task of taking Stalingrad but which also had to move up the Volga and envelop Moscow. It was an army that moved on motors, an army that was mechanized to the very limit. And the whole of it remained here in its entirety. The horse-power of its motors would have been sufficient to plough and sow the deserts, but they ploughed up villages and sowed the fields with shell splinters. Now they lay overturned, their rusty wheels jutting up into the air, black oil soaking like blood into the soil around their remains.

When we landed and entered the city we saw and felt in our hearts what we had already known with our minds.

It was a moonlight night, and our car drove slowly through Stalingrad. The asphalt was clean and had a greasy sheen about it, the kerbstones stretched along the sides of the road in a white line. As long as one kept one's eyes on the road one had the impression that the streets were deserted only because the hour was so late. But when you lifted your eyes. . .

The stars peeped out at you through every window.

The crenellated remains of walls jugged up into the air, the rubble had been piled in heaps, concrete columns stood up like tree trunks from which all the branches had been lopped off. The framework surrounding the lift-shafts up to the sixth floors and the iron remains of lifts which had gone up before the fire began still hung in the shafts. There was a column hanging down from the iron framework of a building, capital downwards and swaying in the wind, and there lay the white statue of a lion, its side gashed open, its head lifted and face twisted in stony agony, the long thin barrel of a lifeless German A.A. gun wedged into its paw.

Silence. The only sound came from the creaking iron hanging from the caves, which sounded as though a rusty bird were flapping its wings trying to fly away.

The silence was suddenly broken by a sweet sound, followed by a second. . . A ballad of Chopin's came down from the stars and spread over the moonlit ruins. The huge pianoforte of night, open, glittering with stars was playing over the town the Germans had destroyed.

"It's terrible," said my companion. "They could have managed here without the radio."

The story told by the music spread over the ruins, filled their emptiness, grew in volume, and rose to the tops of the buildings. The architecture of sound built itself up above the architecture of stones. The marble staircases of the scales ran upwards, the columns of the chords led away into the distance. . . They were imperishable. Neither time nor shells had injured their high marble capitals, had not upturned their massive granite foundations.

In this holocaust of destruction the music was the only complete thing, although it was only music. It ruled here despite the chaos, asserting that there is no death, no destruction, so long as there is Man. It foretold his appearance, hammer and blueprint in hand in the same way as the glow of the dawn foretells the appearance of the sun.

"Yes, it is terrible," I said to my companion, "it is terrible for those who destroy."

I later learned that the radio and the paving of the streets were the first things that had been done after tens of thousands of German bodies had been cleared away and a hundred thousand mines dug out. Radio and asphalt! In the first place it had been necessary to provide a road for transport and information for the people.

On the first morning after my arrival I set out to wander about the streets.

It was wilderness wherever I went. . . . Herculeum after the earthquake. . . . That calamity was nothing more than an unseen movement of the earth which did not know that people were living on it; here we had the planned work of hell. . . .

The peculiar feature of Stalingrad is that its factories, power stations and water mains are at some distance from the city itself. The real city, that which is called "the centre," is a dwelling place with shops, offices, theatres, hospitals and schools. Stalingrad centre is a huge residential seat cut off from the remainder of the city. From the centre to the factories is about ten kilometres and to the power stations it is more than fifteen. It was at this residential centre, filled with women and children and containing no military objectives that the German air attacks were directed.

Linotype machines, blackened and smashed—there had been a printing works here. . . . Operating tables and shining steel instruments amongst stone debris—here there had been a hospital. . . . Heaps of broken crockery, a nickel-plated handrail in a white-tiled hall—here there had been a restaurant. . . . For dozens of years people had worked in order to accumulate and create all this wealth of equipment in a large and comfortable city. In the course of a few months their labour had been destroyed.

Ten magnificently equipped hospitals, eight maternity homes, over 350 medical reception rooms and laboratories,

a splendidly equipped medical college with one of the finest polyclinics in the Soviet Union; 110 secondary schools, a higher pedagogical institute with a huge library and a students' hostel, an institute of mechanical engineering, 12 technical institutes, a superb theatre, cinemas, a tramway service with 70 kilometres of line, a water main that handled 110,000 tones of water a day, hotels, railway stations, a grain elevator. . . . It was a huge city inhabited by more than 600,000 people, one of the most important manufacturing towns of the U.S.S.R. There was everything necessary for the cultured life of its population.

And now—nothing.

57,000 buildings have been swept from the face of the earth.

Ask those there! they know best of all.

With measured tread, automatically keeping in step, in their short, green uniforms they file slowly past their handiwork. Do they see it? Do they realize of what calamity they have been guilty? They see nothing. Their eyes are as absolutely expressionless as the eyes of a corpse, their faces more vacant than the ruins. One of them stumbles and those behind push into him without noticing anything. He falls and those behind walk over him as they would over a heap of rags. They have arrived at the building in which they are to be quartered. They sit down where they are and they will sit like this for hours, their hands between their knees, shoulders hunched, staring at one fixed point. Wave your hand in front of them and they will not blink. Call them and they will not answer.

There is a forty-five-year-old man with a black beard around a shaven chin which looks like a baboon's backside in that hairy frame. What is he thinking of as he sits in front of the ruins? Perhaps he thinks something like this:

"The life of the race is not a logically developed philosophy but the formation of a mystical synthesis of spiritual activity which cannot be explained by mental conclusions or become comprehensible by the establishment of cause and effects. . . ."

Or that one there who holds the

watch to his ear and listens to its ticking, perhaps he had ideas such as:

"... since ancient times the dark, vital stream of blood has had a symbolic meaning, pointing to the realm of metaphysics..."

None of them, of course, thinks anything of the sort. It is doubtful as to whether any of them have even heard of the exercises of all the Rosenbergs and Ernst Krieks in the sphere of "philosophy." This was intended for the brain trust of Germany, steeped in the pseudo-science of the neo-Kantians and Spengler. These are simpler people. Cannon fodder need no scientific terms and still less flashes of mystic illumination. "Hitler's secret weapon," as the fascists call propaganda, follows the army and the whole mechanics of war in the form of numerous booklets and magazines intended for such common folk. In these there are the painstakingly compiled relief maps of Russia with a representation of the oil fountains of Grozny and the wheat fields of the Kuban. On this map the Volga, a river of milk, flowed between banks of honey, and bore the name "Mütterchen Wolga." And over it all a huge hand is depicted, the fingers spread, one of them bearing the inevitable engagement ring.

Some of the beauty depicted here they managed to see with their own eyes. But compared with what they had been told, what they saw was a somewhat different picture. The clumsier and more lying the propaganda, the more terrible its counterpart in real life turned out to be. What had these people who had come here got apart from slaughter machines and submission to their superiors? A good knowledge of their peace-time trade and some catechism-like code which had been driven into their heads together with their steel helmets.

"Everything outside of Germany is worthless, there is no culture but German 'Kultur' on this planet."

"In the West everything is merely improvised," Herr Schuhmacher's popular "ABC of Germany" taught them. "In the West that inner intertwining of man, culture and landscape does not exist." Therefore, when the tank treads crushed the bodies of Belgian children into the ground, they were first and foremost bringing about the intertwining of man and landscape and the destruction of

France was nothing more than the destruction of an improvisation. Here everything was comprehensible and simple.

"In the East where the absence of sewerage, water mains and electric light is the usual thing, everything remains in an amorphous state," the ABC book teaches them. It was therefore essential to build a sewerage system in the East as quickly as possible and for the sake of this great cause it was possible to cover thousands of kilometres and kill thousands and thousands of people. The more they trudged and died, however, the more they noticed that the amorphous and grey did not in any way resemble that which they had seen in the ABC. They passed huge farms, the like of which they had never seen in their own country, they saw fields sown with crops which required a whole army of complicated machines to work them, they saw cities in which sewerage and water mains were absent only as a result of their invasion... And, finally, there came against them such a vast number of tanks, and aircraft, and so many guns volleyed at them that it was either a mirage in the Kalmyk steppe or all the words of the ABC were simply lies.

There was but one hope left—faith in the strategic genius of the generals. Then the steel pincers converged inside the Don bend and the generals together with their genius were in the trap from which there was no way in or out.

Everything had collapsed in the minds of these people. There had been nothing durable great or profound there and so they were left with nothing. When I saw them they had already been fed, washed and treated. But they were not human beings. They did not possess the elementary quality which distinguishes people from cattle—social instinct. It would seem that even in such a situation, even if inside themselves they felt emptiness and distrust they should at least have realized that they were obliged to help each other more than ever before. Their comrades, however, could fall sick and even die beside them and not only did nobody lift a finger to help them but they did not even remove the bodies unless ordered to do so. They showed no concern in what was happening to their neighbours, paid no attention to them.



Fighting in a street of Stalingrad

Sometimes a blow in the face or a gruff curse that sounded like an order—these were their social relations, and then again silence and immobility.

Dolls, with the clockwork run down.

These are they who demolished our city and killed so many of our people. It is useless to ask them anything, they are a sorry sight, there is something shameful about them. They must be kept out of view. After they had buried their dead they were taken away far into the country and it was only the last of them that I saw.

A six-storied house yawned open in front of me. A wide staircase led upwards like a steep moraine filled with rubble. Lumps of marble and pieces of melted blue glass from lampshades lay beside the balustrade. I climbed up through five stories and came out on to a big open space, the sixth storey—without walls. The city lay below me. Beneath me there was a huge square. The sun flooded its asphalt, the light blue sky stretched away from it to unimaginable heights, a clear cloudless sky. There was a deep silence all around.

Suddenly I noticed some movement. Far away, at the end of one of the streets, a small hand cart was moving. It was being pulled by a middle-aged woman and a girl of about sixteen. Bundles of

something were lying on the cart and a tiny little boy was perched on top of them. They stopped and the girl looked around the square. She probably did not do this from curiosity, but because she was looking for something. Suddenly she walked quickly forward as though she had found what she was looking for.

Another girl that I had not noticed before was standing near a bench on the other side of the square. For a split second they stared at one another indecisively, then dashed to meet each other. They ran, as round as balls, their arms outspread for an embrace, although there was the space of the whole square between them. At last they met. They swung round, hugged each other, broke away and again embraced, patted each other, looked one another over, as though each of them with a single glance wanted to know what had happened to the other during the time they had been parted. Tired at last, they sat on the ground and with their arms round one another turned to look at the woman who was coming towards them with a child in her arms. She wiped her eyes with her kerchief, and the little boy dragged forward a big grey cat mangy and gaunt.

This was the first incident I saw in Stalingrad. An event of minor importance but somehow it persisted in my mind in all its details until I had written 43

it down. Only when I had written it did I understand its meaning. I decided that this reunion of two Russian girls on the deserted Stalingrad square is, in actual fact, that which had been won by the great people who defended Stalingrad and are defending the whole of our great Russian land. To the girls it meant the return to their native land. In order that they could swing round, laugh and cry from joy thousands of men had fought on this square, guns had roared all around it, heroes had suffered and died. This reunion had cost more, far, far more than any other reunion on earth, and a poet would say that in this minute all the soldiers who had fallen stood along the walls of the damaged buildings, their serried ranks forming a huge square, and in the middle there resurged again that life which had been fought for and won from death.

I came down from the roof and walked to the Volga. Near the harbour the town bore some resemblance to Odessa. The same narrow tree-shaded streets ran down to the embankment, the same neat and probably beautiful little houses overgrown with grapevines, with quiet little yards, clean footpaths, balconies and cast-iron gates, the whole sheltered from the sun by acacias.

There were not yet any people here, but I read the history of what happened as I passed by these houses. A marble tablet on a broken wall told me that in 1918 this house had been the headquarters of the Tsaritsyn Defence Staff and that here Stalin and Voroshilov had worked. Another house had a plywood board attached to the gate, a message in crooked letters scratched on it with soot:

"Mamma, we are all alive and have gone to Beketovka. Clava."

Under the window of one little house I read:

"To the everlasting memory of grandma and Yura. Kd. 16 Dec. 1942."

"Kd." meant "Killed."

Along the riverbank I followed the railway track that had all been torn up by shells. Locomotives holed in hundreds of places stood aslant the rails. On hardened piles of salt that had been unloaded here before the fighting began I saw the brown stains of blood that had soaked into them. Then I came to the steep bank. It reminded me of a cave city. Everywhere, crammed one against the other, gaped

the openings to the dugouts, the whole ground round about was cut up by trenches and communication passages.

Above one of the dugouts was an inscription half obliterated by rain: "The headquarters of . . . Rodimtsev was located here."

This was that narrow strip of land along the river which our troops hung on to during the siege despite the obvious fact that it was impossible to do so. The whole fortress was a hundred to two hundred metres wide. Orders issued by divisional headquarters could be heard in the front-line even if they were not given very loudly.

"A happy New Year, comrades!" I read over one of the bunkers.

They had stood to the death and they had drunk a toast of victory on that New Year's night. The history of Chuikov's and Rodimtsev's heroes I could not establish—all who took part in that great battle had left Stalingrad before I arrived; but I saw the memorial to the defenders.

It was an ordinary wall, in no way resembling a monument, with an inscription of smudged letters scrawled in soot:

"Here Rodimtsev's guards stood to the death."

A priceless ornament decorates this monument—it was carved in the brick by thousands of bullets and shell splinters, the impress for future centuries of the glory of the unbelievable battle of a handful of brave men against hordes of invading foreigners.

2

I was passing the theatre when human voices, a rarity at that time, disturbed the silence. A large group of people were coming towards me. Most of them were wearing soldiers' greatcoats although some were in civilian clothes. Tall, well-built men, real men of the Volga, they had a business-like appearance about them.

They spread out a map on the bonnet of a broken-down German motor-truck. An elderly man in a cap and a cloth coat was giving explanations, apparently trying to convince those around him of ideas which he himself had had for a long time.

"As long as those houses stood here," he said, "of course it wasn't worth while

pulling them down; now, however, we can do with them anything we like. And why should we hide the Volga from visitors? A man arrives, comes out of the station and sees at once that he is not just somewhere but he's on the Volga, in Stalingrad."

"And what should this look like according to the general plan?" somebody asked.

"The general plan does not allow for any buildings here, only a wide avenue with trees along it, acacias, for example."

"Gnats breed on acacias."

"All right, then we can plant poplars, or something else. In the middle of the square we'll erect a memorial, so that it stands out above the water and the river passenger port. And there's no point in restoring these houses."

"And that building? Say what you like, there are six stories and if we wanted to we could add a seventh."

"That must stand."

"Its architecture is a bit nightmarish."

"We can remould the facade so that it matches the department store."

"It wouldn't make a bad hotel."

"That's true enough. Only I'm not going to give it to you for the time being. For a short while we'll have the builders there."

"We'll see whether you'll give it up or not."

"But not for a short time, not just at first?"

"But it is just at first that hotel is more necessary than anything else. You know how people keep coming."

"Then we'll write it down as such."

We passed on from block to block and each time we stopped the engineers expressed their opinion as to what was to be done first. They discussed the business and jotted down notes. These were the preliminary outlines of restoration, a stock-taking—an account of the ruins. A dismal and stern account was being drawn up for presentation to the Germans. At the same time an account was being drawn up of the forthcoming construction work. This account was for presentation to us, an account which everybody was anxiously and hopefully awaiting.

A man wearing the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, who had come from the Amur district of Siberia and who was accustomed to doing things on a tremendous scale, chipped off some plaster that

remained on a building and looked at the bricks, all smoky from the fires, and rubbed between his fingers the mortar which held the burnt houses together. . .

"We have decided to lay the foundations of a new building science for the reconstruction of buildings," he told me. "We must find out exactly what happens to the various building materials under action of fire, the blows of shells and the blasts of explosions. . . We must find methods for strengthening foundations, repairing cracked walls and roofs, of using the remains of building materials. In other words we shall build but at the same time we shall study and invent. This is already a tremendous work, but imagine how great it will be when we lead our army of builders over the liberated regions. We can't set out on such a campaign unarmed."

In the evening the inspection was broken off. Several captured Mercedes carried the city authorities away.

When the German generals went away to the prison camp one of them cynically said:

"I should imagine the city authorities won't be too pleased to come back to this."

The man to whom this remark was made for some reason or other did not want to tell me what he answered the general. Perhaps he did not even answer him at all.

The city authorities had experienced everything which other Stalingraders had experienced during that terrible year. Perhaps it was even harder for them than for many other people, for they bore the responsibility for all the rest.

I saw a green planted square and a little summer house in it. There was not a whole tree in the square nor an intact support in the summer house. German mortars stood at a distance of fifty metres from this summer house and inside the building was a well-shaft which led to the headquarters of the Regional and City Committees of the Party and of the Regional and City Executive Committees. The members of the Committees reached their "offices" under a hurricane of fire and left them by running from cover to cover firing as they went.

The city was blazing and tumbling down. The Germans were frenzied. They were firing and throwing bombs at random, even in places where there was

absolutely nothing left. But in that seething volcano there was no chaos. Split up into operative groups, the city authorities methodically and determinedly carried on their work.

Hundreds of children lost their parents during those dreadful days. They had to be fed, warmly wrapped up and taken down to the river where they were put on ferries and sent to the left bank. Women and old people had to be helped out of the fire zone, and the difficult business of organizing the crossing over the Volga had to be directed. The banks of the river were under incessant mortar fire and a rain of bombs from the air. As soon as a ferry drew near the Germans opened fire. All the gang planks were burnt and men knee-deep, and sometimes waist-deep in water carried the children and the old people to the barges, lifting them up to those who took them on board. Those who were left behind for the next trip had to be got under cover under the steep bank, they had to be fed and got ready for the next party.

All the bakeries and all the shops had been burnt down, stalls were set up underground and dining-rooms organized in cellars from where food was sent to the worst places. They not only had to evacuate the town, however, they had to defend it. Brigades were organized amongst the population to build barricades and dig trenches and every block of houses was turned into a strongpoint. It is noteworthy that all this time the radio was working in the city and the newspaper *Stalingradskaya Pravda* was published regularly. The printshop was destroyed during the first air raid and printing machines in other places were also put out of action. The newspaper was set by hand in a different place every day, the copies of it were drawn off in a hand press, but still the paper was issued.

Side by side with information about the fighting the newspaper carried articles about the harvest in the collective farms on the left bank as though the monstrous struggle in the city were only a temporary episode.

Incidentally this feeling of temporariness and the confidence that the assault would be repulsed was not only present amongst the leaders. They themselves were astonished at the strength of all the Stalingraders' belief in victory.

Despite the extremely serious situation in the city it was difficult to persuade many of them to evacuate and the usual answer made was:

"We can stick it a little longer and they'll drive the swine away."

This confidence made it possible to maintain good order in the most critical moments. Even at the river crossing there was neither panic nor bustle although there were thousands of women and children there.

Paulus had surrendered on the night of January 31st, but eleven days before this there had been a meeting of the municipal organizations held in the surviving district of Stalingrad to discuss measures which would have to be taken in the days that immediately followed the forthcoming route of the German army.

The city was liberated. The city's leaders were sent to those parts of Stalingrad from which the invaders had been cleared out while those enraged Germans who were still left were setting fire to the houses on the outskirts of the city. At night odd platoons of the gangster army crawled out of their cellars like rabid dogs and fired bursts from their sub-machine-guns along deserted streets. Carts drawn by oxen and camels were already entering the city. They brought flour to feed those who had been waiting amongst the ruins for so many months.

3

Here is the story of a mother and daughter who went through all the torments of the siege of Stalingrad.

... Natasha had not much experience of life, she was still only eleven years old, but it rarely happens that an adult lives through so much as this little girl has.

It was not a large family—father, mother and daughter. The father was killed in one of the air raids. The mother buried him and then decided to leave the city in order to save her daughter. As they left the house loaded down with household effects splinters from a bursting bomb smashed the mother's hip-bones and slightly wounded the daughter in the leg. Natasha dragged her mother back into the house. Next day the Germans forced their way into the district in which they lived.

Those few months were such that when the woman tries to talk about them she cannot speak connectedly and just hangs her head, unable to withstand the horror of her own memories. Then Natasha takes her by the hand and with the voice of a teacher says:

"Mummy, you mustn't get excited."

Her childish face is one of strange contrasts. Beside her baby mouth there are the fine wrinkles of a thirty-year-old woman, her eyes lie in deep shadow, and her eyebrows move with such austerity that one involuntarily thinks of her father who, no doubt, also frowned like that in serious moments. Her big, clear eyes, however, were still those of a child, and it seemed that they were filled with the scintillating moisture of happiness. That glance has been filled with lustre ever since that hour which they had awaited for so many months—the hour of liberation.

They had not believed that they would live. It had seemed impossible. Hunger, terrible frosts and wounds—what else was necessary to cause death?

The first to arrive were the S.S. units. An officer, holding a scented handkerchief to his nose, silently showed the soldiers the places where they were to look. They looted everything of value, the carpet, a box of "Palekh" work and for some reason or other, all Natasha's toys. The next day German soldiers came and took away all the linen, pillows, cooking pots and even two chairs. Then the Rumanians came. They took everything they could carry in their hands. A few days later mother and daughter were left between bare walls. The sick woman lay on boards covered with old rags. This did not worry the marauders. They broke into the house, pushed the sick woman on to the floor, threatened her with their sub-machine-guns, cursed horribly, and even fired. Everything eatable was looted. There was not even a bucket in which to fetch water. Sometimes the bandits even stole that handful of firewood which the girl had managed to gather during the day. At last the mother resolved on a desperate step. She wrote the terrible word "typhus" on a board and hung it up near the door. The visits ceased. Very soon a German "sanitary" squad arrived and without even going into the house drenched the walls with kerosene and set fire to them. Exactly

how the girl dragged her mother out of the fire neither of them remembers. It was something in the nature of a miracle which occurred without their participation.

They crawled into a concrete storehouse nearby in which there were neither windows, nor chimney, nor even a door. They lived out in the open. It was during the months of December and January, in a winter so cold that birds were frozen in flight.

"I am only alive because I have Natasha."

She did not complain, her mother never saw a tear on her gaunt cheeks. She got bandages from somewhere and every day dressed her mother's wounds which would not heal, for her organism had not sufficient strength to fight against sickness. Nobody can tell where that tiny creature found so much courage and determination. Every day she fetched water, passing through the firing zone to get it. She maintained a fire in their concrete tomb and still had enough strength left to comfort her mother. Snuggling up close to her mother as she had done in better times, she asked her to tell her a story, either because she really wanted to hear a fairy tale or because she wanted to turn her mother's attention away from bitter thoughts to some slight maternal solicitude.

The worst of it was that the woman could not help her daughter. She lay alone in the cold storehouse suffering from the pain in her hip and painted herself horrible pictures of Natasha's death as she wandered about in search of something to eat, and these visions were the more real in that the roar of the firing never ceased and each shot seemed directed straight at the body of her daughter.

At last Natasha's strength began to fail. It was hard for her to go out into the street, more and more frequently she was overcome by irresistible sleep, a sleep that was like the transition to death. Often her mother awakened her because it seemed as though her daughter were not breathing.

"I tried to accustom myself to the idea of approaching death, I tried to regard death as an escape from the horrors of life. I did not succeed however: I always began to think about Natasha and I realized that I must not die. Of course I would have died without her, and not

only because of the cold and hunger but because it was easier to die than to live."

They lay in one another's arms keeping each other warm and listening to the firing that was fiercer than ever that night. Suddenly the gun that stood near their storehouse ceased firing. The machine-guns in that area also grew mute and deep silence fell. It was so strange and so unusual that they thought they were already dead. Then they heard sub-machine-gun fire somewhere away to the right and shortly afterwards the roar of approaching motors. This sound passed and they heard a quiet conversation near the entrance to their place. They couldn't distinguish the words but Natasha suddenly jumped up from the boards and ran out into the street. Her mother could not stop her for she ran as fast as she could, her eyes flashing like those of an angry kitten.

A Red Army man brought her back. He was carrying her in his arms, a tiny little girl dressed in rags who had suddenly appeared before his eyes amongst the ruins while the battle was at its height. He held the child out to her mother as though he were returning it. Natasha was unconscious.

A lieutenant and a doctor soon came into the concrete storehouse. They brought chocolate and tangerines with them. They had no time for they were hurrying forward. The doctor washed the mother's wounds, put on fresh dressing and made a note of her name. Almost immediately afterwards more soldiers came and now there was nearly always somebody with the mother and daughter. These were their own people. Only those, who have lived through what these two had, could understand the full meaning of the words "their own people." The first few hours after the liberation were the happiest of their lives, everybody trying to do what he could to help them. Things to eat were showered on them, they were brought hot soup such as they hadn't seen for over six months, people told them so many different things that their heads were in a whirl from a mass of names, titles and events. They grasped hungrily at everything because it was "their own."

They were soon taken to hospital. Natasha wasn't ill, but she seemed to be asleep and only her eyes which were now filled with tears all the time burned as though she had a fever. This light remained in her eyes for a long time, and I

was astonished when I saw them for the first time a long while afterwards—when I saw the girl who had saved her mother as heroes are saving their country.

4

It was evening on the square in front of the factory and the first stars were gleaming in the clear rose-coloured sky.

There had been a time when they had lit the round frosted street lamps here which shone against the background of the setting sun as though some of the daylight which was disappearing behind the horizon remained in them. The tires of limousines swished over the shining asphalt, the white light of the designing bureau shone from the windows of the factory offices and the music from the summer club floated out across the flower beds through the fine spray of the fountains.

It was still the same square, the same buildings were there and the same monument stood in the middle. But it was all empty, the statue had no arms, a foreign motor-truck lay beside it, overturned, and through the windows of the factory offices shone the light of the evening sky.

I climbed up to the top, the fallen plaster crunching underfoot, walked over to the parapet which had once been the wall of the fifth storey, and looked down over the factory. I looked at the chaos of devastation divided regularly into the rectangular blocks of the workshops by the roads that ran between them and tried to remain calm. I did not succeed, however, in retaining my calm.

... Suddenly a strange sound attracted my attention. It came from behind the walls of one of the workshops, a whirring sound. At times it stopped, then began again. I made my way through the stones lying before the door and went in.

A man in a quilted jacket, spectacles in a steel frame on his nose, grey bristles on his cheeks, was standing at a huge lathe. With a file he was shaping some cylindrical object, the lathe slowly turning.

I went closer and saw a second man. He was a big-built man with a red beard, wearing a blue shirt open to the waist and wet through with sweat. Sweat was running down his broad, red, freckled face. With both hands he grasped a wooden handle that had been fixed to a huge

fly-wheel. Grunting and breathing heavily he turned the wheel.

I greeted them.

"What are you doing, comrades?"

The mechanic laid the file down, and with a movement that showed he had long been accustomed to the work, measured up the job with a gauging block.

"Just a little bit more. What are we doing? Making a piston for the Diesel."

Red-beard let go of his handle to wipe his perspiring face on his shirt. His small, amber-coloured eyes rested on me.

"He's making it, I'm just turning. I generate one horse-power. That's the minimum."

"Come on, come on, Ginger," the mechanic interrupted him, "we're finishing the job."

The bearded man, apparently, was glad of a chance to rest.

"There's a trade for you!" he continued. "I used to be an electrician but now I'm the motor. Got anything to smoke?"

"You can smoke afterwards," said the old man angrily. "You're too lazy for a motor. It's getting dark and there's no light."

"And perhaps my internal combustion isn't working any more? You just stand there and don't want to know anything. D'you think I couldn't turn up a piston? It's only respect for your old age that prevents me from making you take a turn at the wheel."

He rolled a cigarette and blew out a huge cloud of smoke.

"When shall I be able to work with electricity again!" said the old man with a sigh. "That's a lazy scoundrel the Lord sent me!"

"You'll work with electricity when I bring it to your lathe."

"And you won't bring it to me until the Diesel works. Will the Diesel work without a piston? Of course it won't. And who's making the piston? Mechanic Semyon Semyonich, that's who!"

Red-beard winked at me. He obviously enjoyed tormenting the old man.

"Master Semyon Semyonich plus my one horse-power," he said and spat on his hands. "Well, then, here goes!"

He took hold of the handle and the fly-wheel began to turn again. The mechanic took up his file.

"According to plan we produce the first current from our temporary generator tomorrow," he said. "We have given

our pledge to repair the Diesel. The only thing left to do is to make the piston true."

As I left the factory I saw a light shining through the cracks of a plank door. I went into the room, the walls of which were roughly made from broken bricks. It was lit by several candles. On the tables and home-made benches there were about thirty men sitting and in the middle, standing behind a crazily leaning table, was a man smartly dressed in a semi-military uniform—Tkachov, the factory director, I was told.

I sat down in one corner and asked my neighbour what was going on there. He looked at me, astonished at my ignorance.

"Shop managers reporting," he answered.

Shops! I had just seen those shops. What was there to manage?

The reports however were real enough. This was an old institution that had been long ago introduced into the factory. The leaders of the factory workshops gathered every evening in the luxurious office of the director, reported briefly on the results of the day's work and on measures to be adopted the next day. And now... In this cave-like apartment amidst the ruins... The proceedings became even stranger as I listened to what they said and, more important, how they said it.

"Comrade Gridin," the director called to an engineer, "you had to repair a pipe-drawing machine. Is it ready?"

The tone of the question was strict and official. The secretary, laying some papers before the director, apparently to check up what the engineer would say pointed to something with a pencil. The engineer stood up and drawing himself up almost like a soldier, reported.

"The machine is ready but it won't work without electricity."

"Have you tried turning it by hand?"

"It goes well by hand."

"If you get current tomorrow can you start work?"

"If the fire did not cause any structural defects in the metal we shall be able to work."

"What else have you done?"

"According to plan..."

"I'm not asking about the plan. According to plan everything should have been done. I'm not interested in the plan at the moment. I'm interested in you. In what way have you shown your own

personal initiative, that is, what have you done apart from the plan?"

The director's tone was merciless, his questions were hard and straight to the point so that no equivocating was possible.

The engineer remained silent, his head bowed.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You have 78 men, a whole army! And you can't do the simplest things!"

The engineer did not speak. I looked round at the faces of the others and did not see anywhere sympathy with the man who was being censured.

"You must use your brains," said my neighbour softly, "that's why you're an engineer, so that you can work with your brains."

"Comrade Rudin, how do you explain the delay in repairing the dwelling houses?"

"There's not enough wood for the floors and I'm held up with the stoves."

"Can't you manage without stoves?"

"They demand them, Boris Grigorievich."

"They're quite right in demanding them, but why your delay?"

"I've got one stove builder and he is over seventy."

"Comrade Zaychenko, have any stove-builders arrived?"

Zaychenko was sitting at a separate table. He was the personnel manager. He sat at his table like a cashier at a cash desk. All the problems depended on his lists which he laid out like stocks and shares. From time to time all heads turned to him, there was silence while he wrote something down, "placed ticks against some names. . . Very often he said: "No, there aren't enough." Then the director frequently went up to him and together they went over the pages with a pencil and again they began replacing two bricklayers or one street-sweeper. There were no people, they had not come yet.

"There aren't any stove-builders," said Zaychenko, looking over his records. "We have a masseuse, a piano-tuner, a librarian but no stove-builders. . ."

"Comrade Rudin, can you build a stove yourself?"

"I'm not a heating engineer, Boris Grigorievich."

A roar of laughter ran round the cave. Rudin waved his hand, realizing that what he had said was nonsense.

"Get a manual from the library and train a brigade of workers in the evenings.

Zaychenko, give him the masseuse, the piano-tuner and four bricklayers."

"The piano-tuner's already been allotted for telephone work."

"Good. That question's settled. Is the bath-house ready?"

"Yes."

"Is it a decent bath-house, comrades?"

Exclamations of approval resounded through the semi-darkness.

"Are there any birch-twigs brushes?"

"We've organized a platoon of old women to make them and they will bring them tomorrow."

And so the conference went on, one of the most astonishing factory conferences that I have ever had occasion to witness. The conditions somewhat resembled the first meetings on new building sites during the first years of the First Five-Year Plan. The meeting was remarkable on account of the fact that the attitude of the participants to their conditions was quite different from what it had been in those years. At that time men had only controlled circumstances with the greatest difficulty, they were overloaded with some things and neglected others. At that time they had only just learnt to control circumstances and had used up tremendous energy on things that were not worth it.

I now saw before me a group of people, who, although they were working in difficult circumstances, knew exactly what they had to do, people who had been trained to lead and to obey.

These were not novices who would only become leaders in the future, these were people who were already guardsmen, who under any conditions would retain their battle formation and continue operations on the basis of the experience of many battles.

The factory was a wreck, just as many other factories were in ruins, but the people who were beginning its reconstruction were not like those who had begun its construction fifteen years before. Formerly there would have been discussions for a week on the building of a shed to house the transformers whereas now in ten minutes a plan was made on a page torn from a notebook and the engineer went to work confident that the new transformer house would not be any worse than the other fifty he had built. This was the great difference which decided everything.

I realized that when I stood on the roof

of the factory offices, horrified at the ruins, I was like that tender-hearted loungeur who saw a man knocked down by a car. He saw the blood and heard the groans and thought that nothing was left of the victim but a lump of torn flesh. When the surgeon came and the wounds were washed and examined, when it was discovered which nerves had been cut and which bones broken, steady hands set to work to bring the man back to life.

The conference ended at midnight with an announcement by Zaychenko that 1,200 Young Communist League members were coming to the factory.

We returned by moonlight. The engineers strode along in silence, tired after their day's work. Heads bowed, some in quilted jackets, some in overalls, some in old ski-costumes, they walked slowly past the mutilated buildings that they were to heal.

The engineers walked through the ruined factory; I glanced at their unshaven faces with their deep-sunk cheeks. I knew that when they got home they would not go straight to bed although they had to be on their feet at daybreak the next morning—each of them had some mending to do, some clothes to wash, water had to be brought, perhaps their rough quarters had to be tidied up or a piece of plywood had to be nailed over a hole to keep the wind out... I could not help but ask one of my companions, an old acquaintance, why the director dealt so strictly with them.

"It's an unwritten agreement," he answered, "it's easier to work that way, for him and for us. It's more efficient, less bother. It's war, my friend."

5

Many of their old comrades were no longer amongst them. Some of them had been at the front for a long time, others had been killed here near Komsomol Square, near the memorial, near the Institute of Mechanical Engineering... That night a planning engineer, Alexei Stepanov came to see me and talked until dawn telling the history of the defence of the factory of which he had been one of the leaders.

It will be remembered that the Germans hoped to take Stalingrad in their stride straight from the march, relying on their favourite method of surprise. With the aid of an enormous number of motor-vehicles and tanks they drove close up

to the city and their appearance in many places was quite unexpected.

August 23rd was a sunny summer day. The factory was working as usual, people's thoughts were turned to their daily worries and cares on the industry front although it was known that the Germans were approaching. From early morning German scouting planes flew over the factory, at midday the bombers appeared and the bombing of the distant approaches to the city began. At about four o'clock several groups of German tanks appeared in the immediate vicinity of the factory. In the time that elapsed from ten in the morning till six in the evening, the rear had become the front and was the scene of furious fighting. For the peaceful workers this was a test of their endurance and courage.

In those few hours a formidable force grew up in front of the factory whose strength could not be measured with the Brinnels and Rockwells¹ in the factory laboratory. It consisted of workers, engineers and scientists, 1,600 men armed to the teeth with the weapons that had been making up to the day before. Anybody who thought that they could not use these weapons would have been making a mistake. For more than twelve months all of them had been practicing handling tanks, throwing grenades and firing machine- and sub-machine-guns. They called themselves by the proud name of the Stalingrad Proletarian Tank Brigade, a name which recalled memories of the heroic days when the Tsaritsyn proletariat had defended their town against the enemies of the revolution.

During the first few hours after the brigade took up their position the workers felt themselves cramped. Up to this moment their whole lives had been spent in creative work and not one of them had ever killed a man. Therefore when four unknown tanks appeared before the trenches in the twilight, their feeling was more one of curiosity than of hatred. They watched men in green uniforms climb out of the tanks and run to the gully. They could not get it into their heads immediately that this was the moment when they should aim with "part number so and so" or press "part number so and so" in order

¹ Instruments for measuring the tensile strength of metal.

that the enemy should fall dead. Before they had pulled themselves together, however, the bursting of shells deafened them, showered earth on them and a short astonished cry informed them of misfortune. It was not the German who fell dead but Pavlov, a young tractor driver. Then they opened fire. They had keen eyes, their hands were accustomed to accuracy and what is more they had their factory behind their backs. It is very rare that anybody does not love his own factory, but this one was especially worthy of love and not only because it was one of the most beautiful in the world but also because nearly all these people were its builders, they had begun to work here in the factory before it actually existed. They were defending their own son. And what fight that was!

Then Lev Dylo, the youth who had worked as mechanic at the accounting departments came running up. In the morning he had been building defences. He sat down to smoke in the shade of the trench they had dug, when he heard the sound of a motor. He looked up and saw men with sub-machine-guns held at their hips running towards him. They were Germans. They knocked him down and the first thing they did when he could no longer resist was to tear the watch off his wrist and take the money out of his pockets. Then they made him their prisoner. There were two other lads from the factory with him. As they were marching along the edge of the gully Dylo leapt down into it, his companions following him, and they ran along the bottom pursued by German bullets. He dashed into brigade headquarters, ragged, dirty, his fists clenching at the air and shouted: "They're there! Hurry up! Where are the machine-guns?" He still had not learned to report military affairs in a soldierly fashion for they still seemed to him to be events concerning his own life. A few days later he was put in command of a machine-gun section.

The real fighting began the next day and the mechanic-guardsmen fought like real guardsmen in this battle. Wave after wave of enemy armoured cars and tanks bore down on the regular tank unit which was in position beside the brigade. They were treated to such a reception that they turned to the left flank where the factory brigade stood. Here again the well aimed fire of antitank guns and machine-

guns mowed them down and they retreated, to return with double their number. After three hours' stubborn defence the factory brigade assumed the offensive. They hurled Hitlerites back four kilometres from the outskirts of the factory settlement. The Germans no doubt thought that picked Soviet troops were fighting on this sector of the front. They therefore gathered an armoured force and launched a furious attack on the metal workers and on Major Girda's tank unit which stood next to them with forces greatly exceeding those of the Soviet troops. Dozens of enemy tanks accompanied by motorized infantry charged down on them. But Major Girda and Senior Technician Vychugov were worthy of one another. The commanders were determined to defend their positions at all cost. And defend them they did. A battalion of Germans and fourteen German tanks were left in front of our trenches. The enemy retired to his own lines. Then the Germans resolved to try a flanking movement. They continued a frontal attack and at the same time moved in the direction of the Volga. They were, however, unable to conceal their preparations for this operation.

Marussya Torgasheva, the interpreter for the deaf and dumb, who worked in the factory's utility department, and the fifty-year-old foundryman Grigori Dubrovnikov, returning from reconnaissance, informed Vychugov of the forthcoming German move. Vychugov adopted counter-measures, re-grouping his forces so that a battalion of metal workers faced the Germans attacking from the flank.

In addition to the tanks German aircraft now bombed our defences, and a fierce artillery barrage preceded the attack. Three times the Hitlerites tried to reach our defences and three times they rolled back with heavy losses.

This lasted for several days. The mechanics were as hard as metal and the Germans could do nothing with them.

On August 31st the Germans undertook a complete re-grouping of their forces. The Stalingrad Proletarian Brigade was faced by five thousand sub-machine-gunners, about ten thousand infantry and three hundred tanks on the enemy side of the front. This force outnumbered the tiny detachment of workers, engineers and scientists by more than ten to one.

Sending their bombers in advance and then showering our forward positions with shells and mortar bombs the Germans launched their attack. Their numerical superiority was so great that Vychugov decided to withdraw. The order was given to occupy new positions. The withdrawal was made in good order and with only one mishap. Aksyonov's section did not succeed in retiring or perhaps did not want to retire. They were surrounded by German sub-machine-gunners and Aksyonov was wounded. Nearby him was Kovalyov, a fitter who for four hours kept up fire on the besieging Germans, protecting his commander. He had used up all his ammunition when a group from the brigade broke through to his help. They found him with a deep wound in the chest and another wound in the stomach. Around him lay the bodies of twenty-two Germans. When they brought him into the trenches he said to Stepanov as he was losing consciousness:

"Leave me here, commissar, I can still see."

He died a few hours later.

The brigade withdrew to the outskirts of the settlement and dug in along a stream called the Mechotka. They all swore to stand by their factory to the last heartbeat. For ten days they stood like this, alone, beating off the furious attacks of the German regular army, numerically many times their superior. Then they

fought elbow to elbow with the regular units of our army, defending the factory with their lives, while the workers and the more valuable equipment were evacuated.

6

Who was this man, Nikolai Vychugov, the brigade commander and what was his fate?

He was a metal worker, a foundryman. He worked in the steel-moulding shop as senior technician. It would be hard to find a more modest and peaceful man. His work did not demand any organizational talents: he did not have to do so much with people as with processes. He hardly ever had to direct, he was engaged all the time on testing and creating new methods of casting. Metal and its whims were his business. He was the technical mind of the shop: he always had to be able to decide on the correct methods to be used. He was reticent and extraordinarily industrious. As far as military matters are concerned he was never fond of them. During military exercises at the factory he had a very humble job and was apparently satisfied with it; he was wrapped up in his technology on which depended the quality of the weapons turned out by the factory.

When the Germans broke through to the factory territory on August 23rd the first person to report to brigade head-



German remains

quarters was Vychugov. In a voice that betrayed no emotion he said to Stepanov:

"Well, Comrade Commissar, it seems that war has come to us."

This was a perfectly accurate and brief formulation of the situation at the moment.

Stepanov sent him to the watch tower. Four hours later he came down.

"I think it's time," he said to Stepanov.

He was right. The brigade was ordered to muster and by evening the factory workers had taken up their positions on the firing lines.

Vychugov immediately showed his fine qualities. He was perfectly calm as though he were in the workshop and not under a hurricane of fire, as though he were studying the behaviour of the metal which poured into the mould and not the operations of large numbers of men. His ideas on how to conduct a battle proved to be very precise and very well planned although they were lightning-like. He was completely immersed in the process of the battle and nothing else existed for him. Soon the brigade commander, whose age made it impossible for him to withstand the rigours of modern warfare was put out of action. Then Stepanov made a bold move: Vychugov was immediately nominated commander. The commissar did not doubt him and he was not mistaken. Vychugov was as good a commander as he was a worker. The hidden talent of an organizer and strategist was so strong in him that it seemed as if it had only waited for just such an opportunity to come to the surface. The commander and the commissar became friends. They did not part company throughout the fighting and would have been together now had not fate decided otherwise.

At the end of September the Germans resolved to make a desperate effort to break through the workers' defences. For several days they amassed forces and prepared for a final storm. The attack began on the 28th. Such an attack the brigade had never before experienced although they had seen a month of the fiercest fighting. The Germans did not grudge men. They crawled forward through mountains of their own dead taking cover behind dozens of their own wrecked tanks.

Vychugov never left the forward positions for a minute. He had all the details

of the battle in hand and at the same time controlled it on all sectors. They saw him everywhere in the trenches, all the troops heard his voice. In the sixteenth hour of the battle he was wounded in the shoulder. The commissar ordered him at least to go to the medical battalion and have it dressed, but Vychugov was only astounded at the idea.

"But can't you see what's going on?" he said reproachfully, and pressing a piece of gauze into the wound continued to command his forces.

At six a.m. the next morning the German attack petered out—the enemy had not broken through.

Vychugov returned to headquarters. Half an hour later a telephone message from Gorokhov's headquarters came through that a group of German sub-machine-guns had filtered into the area of the Institute and Komsomol Square. For the first time Vychugov's face displayed some emotion.

"That's very serious," he said, "they must be stopped at all costs."

He was right. A company of sub-machine-guns in the rear of the brigade could do them more harm than a division in front.

It was a matter of seconds. It would require time to get any forces from the forward positions. There were, however, no other forces available.

Vychugov ordered the platoon guarding headquarters to follow him and ran out of the dugout.

There were fifty of them, no more, but they had their commander with them, a man whom they were accustomed to trust implicitly. They had not advanced a hundred metres before furious firing forced them to halt and lie down. It was, however, only for a minute so as to get their bearings. Raising himself on his elbow Vychugov glanced round. There were houses there and a railway embankment. The cover was such that there could be only one correct tactic. Vychugov found it immediately. He ordered the platoon to deploy, camouflage themselves, and advance in short spurts in the direction of the brook. The Germans were disconcerted at the unexpected extension of the front and they did not know how many men there were against them. A minute later they opened furious mortar fire. Having a poor view of the enemy they fired haphazard into the darkness. Dawn broke and

swifter action had to be taken. The mortars continued firing but the sub-machine-gun fire grew less and less as the Germans withdrew.

Vychugov dashed forward, his men following behind him.

A chance mortar bomb burst a couple of metres away from him. He fell. Stepanov felt a fearful blow and realized that he had been badly wounded. He found strength enough, however, to crawl over to his friend.

Vychugov lay face up. Blood filled his eyes and mouth.

A number of soldiers surrounded the commanders prepared to defend them.

With difficulty, overcoming his pain and dizziness, Stepanov called to his friend:

"Kolya! What's wrong with you?"

He placed his hand under his friend's head in order to raise him and immediately realized that his fingers had sunk beneath the bones of his skull.

He heard a voice weak but fierce.

"Carry on!" said Vychugov. "Why have you halted? Across the embankment!.."

He broke off with a gasp.

He clenched his fists, his face was distorted with the agony of a super-human effort: he was struggling with pain. There was something he wanted to say, something he no doubt realized he would most likely never be able to say.

"Alexei," the commissar heard, "don't you dare surrender my beauty, do you hear? Run! Drive them to the Mechotka."

Those were his last words.

Stepanov was taken to the medical battalion unconscious.

The German sub-machine-gunners were wiped out, Gorokhov attacking them from the rear.

This was the last battle of the Stalingrad Proletarian Brigade, a brigade of workers, engineers and scientists. Next day September 30th, the men of the brigade were posted to Lieutenant-General Gorokhov's unit.

7

When the order to abandon the factory was given, the director, his assistant and other leading factory workers were compelled to leave. They were the last to go. They did everything they possibly

could—the workers and the most valuable equipment had been sent away. The factory was on fire.

A five-seater limousine, a pick-up and a three-ton truck passed the Dzerzhinsky memorial and drove on towards the city. The people sitting in them did not think of the danger from the hundreds of aircraft roaring overhead. Despite the fact that the preceding days had prepared them for this hour in the same way as an illness prepares friends for the death of a near one, so, in the same way as death is always somewhat unexpected and hard to bear, this departure was suddenly felt to be a profound and unexpected sorrow.

They were the last to leave. They had done everything possible but still it would have been better not to look at the avenue of young trees along the road, at these gabled cottages where the engineers lived, at the huge new buildings in the settlement which would have become a real town if it had been allowed to grow for another two years or so.

"That building is undamaged," said somebody.

They did not know, however, which would be the better now: to see that building intact or lying in ruins.

"When we return there will be somewhere to work for the first few days," said Gavrilov, the assistant director.

"If they do not blow it up before their retreat," answered Tkachov.

Nobody said anything else. Idle chatter would have been out of place at that moment. The workers were already employed in other factories, also the machinery and the factory itself. . . it was already hidden by a bend in the road and to return to it was impossible.

A little round object in a nickel-plated box which lay in Tkachov's pocket, the factory stamp, was all that was left to represent the factory.

This is how the days of wandering began. They travelled by day, spent nights in villages, made telephone calls back there, to Stalingrad. They could not go away from the city. . . They wandered about from place to place—wherever their people and their machines were working, checking, calculating, making lists, but never once going away. They counted their time now by the broadcasts of the Soviet Information Bureau. They stayed wherever there was a loudspeaker. The

certain feeling that they would return never left them.

The communiqués did not yet bring them any relief. Returning from the public loud-speaker in the heavy frost that comes in the darkness before dawn, they turned over in their minds every word of the communiqué seeking some faint sign of hope in them.

At last the long awaited communiqué was broadcast. It was the first news of our offensive. After that telegrams and telephone calls smothered Stalingrad like snow in a blizzard.

"Can we go back?" was the thought in people's minds.

Then one day they heard the voice of Chuyanov, the first secretary of the Stalingrad Regional Party Committee, on the telephone. It was the same voice they remembered hearing at plenary meetings and in talks with them at their factories, a voice that was very calm. The words he said, however, made them feel hot in spite of the frost.

"As things have turned out you may return," said Chuyanov.

They hurried home.

Paulus surrendered on January 31st and on the morning of February 3rd they were already back at the factory.

The first thing they saw was the burnt out "Professors' House." The Germans had set fire to it an hour before they surrendered. The reflexes of banditry was all that was left to these apes.

There was frost and snow, short days and darkness.

Of the whole factory they found only one room that was not entirely destroyed; they pasted the windows up with thick paper and lay down to sleep. They were back home.

During the day they had not managed to examine the factory in detail. When Gavrilov closed his eyes he saw again, with all the clarity of a photograph, all that he had seen during the day.

It was indeed like some prehistoric catastrophe.

He had not imagined such a holocaust possible. Those sagging metal girders that had settled down on the machines. . . And what machines!

How clearly he remembered the time when all this had gleamed blue; glistening, polished metal! Today he had only had time to inspect the motor section. There were machines that had caused them

so much trouble when they first began to learn how to work them. Now they were red with rust like clotted blood and the burnt windings of the electric motors stuck out of the housings like bunches of blackened straws. The thing that upset him most of all, however, was the fact that there were crank shafts rigged up in the grinding machines all ready for processing. That had been done long ago on the last day when the factory worked. They too were all covered in a thick coat of scaling rust. At some thousandth turn of the machine they had stopped revolving, and before they were born they had died inside the machine.

It reminded him of something he had seen a long while ago, in Moscow, in the Paleontological Museum. On the wall there was a sheet of slate and on it, like a bas-relief, a strange, long-snouted fish. Millions of years ago some mighty cataclysm had filled in the place in the ocean where this fish-lizard was swimming and it had remained in the slate frozen in that last movement when disaster overtook it.

Although such contemplation was possible it was not necessary; what is more, it was harmful.

An engineer who is a creator cannot bear to look at destruction. More than anybody else he realizes the value of what has been destroyed; where we are only horrified at the chaos he can imagine all the labour that was necessary to make it, all the efforts that had to be made so that this edifice as a whole should be created from raw materials. He did all this himself, therefore he knows the value of it!

He is not only an engineer, however, and the factory is not only the creation of technical science. The factory is one of the country's fighting units and the engineer is the commander of its crew. For one night he could turn over from side to side, his mind filled with sadness and sentiment, but the next night he must sleep, a sound sleep, so as to wake up fresh in the morning. He was faced with a mass of work.

At first it was morally difficult, for the ruination affected him. Even the rough conditions under which they lived could not blot out the feelings of bitterness which took hold of all of them in that desert. It resembled that longing for the Mainland which overtakes some wintering parties in the Arctic. Instead of

the Main and it was an irradicable picture of a beautiful factory which each of them held in his memory. Sometimes it seemed that they could do nothing. They cheered one another up, however, and did not allow these feelings to be put into words. They introduced the rule of strictness and business-like methods, unconditional obedience and uninterrupted work.

A certain time was necessary for them to remould their own consciousness. This did not require much of them but it was difficult. They had to forget that pleasant feeling of a rich and well-run business which was theirs when they entered their workshop every morning. As if they had been sent to rebuild a quite unknown factory, which they had never seen working—that was how they ought to feel about the job in hand. For some time from now on their mutilated favourite would become for them the construction job, and they simply had the task of solving the problems of rehabilitation irrespective of what recollections they might have.

When they got used to this idea everything was quite different. There were even causes for joy such as they had deemed impossible under these conditions. Day after day they had inspected what was left of the factory and each day they became more convinced that their first impression was an exaggeration.

Every inspection brought pleasant surprises. They went into a workshop where it seemed that everything had been reduced to cinders and rust, only to discover that the metal of the machines was merely coated in a thin corrosive layer on the surface, or that machines had remained intact under a fallen wall protected from the fire by rubble. They saw the roof fallen and wrecked, but a further inspection showed them that the roof had fallen on account of a few supporting columns that had been damaged by shell fire and that if these columns were repaired it would be possible to restore order.

They went deep down into the earth, into the huge underground premises of the factory and saw that all the pipes carrying steam, electric power and water and the whole sewage system were hardly damaged at all.

Perhaps it was just as well that things had seemed much worse at first! Their finds and discoveries raised their spirits.

And again in their minds they saw their factory, but this time it was not a picture of its past but of its future. They would rebuild it, a thousand devils take it! With ruler and compass and hammer they launched just such a wonderful offensive as their comrades had with rifle and machine-gun!

8

I saw only the beginning, the first steps of this offensive. I cannot explain the feeling of one who watches this huge organism returning to health. I remember once after crawling over dead and still untouched ruins, stumbling over heaps of rubbish, I suddenly found myself in that same workshop which the leaders of the factory had been talking about when they went away. The Germans had managed to blow it up in two places, leaving gaping holes and the structure all twisted. Passing through here I suddenly came into an extensive well-lit hall, the walls of which had been neatly covered with plywood and where electric welders were sparking away up in the roof. The first thing I saw was women scrubbing the floor. In the middle of the building a kind of glass-walled office had been built and there the engineers were working. Wooden trestles stood along the walls of the shop on which machinery was already being assembled. The regular hum of human voices took the place of the usual buzz of machinery. When we went nearer we saw that the machines were being assembled under supervision. Near each machine stood a senior worker who was delivering a lecture and at the same time showing the others how to do the job. Machines were being assembled and at the same time new workers were being trained.

Suddenly a bell sounded up under the roof. It could not be anything else than the signal given by a crane-driver. But a crane in that factory at that time?! Almost unbelievable! All faces were turned upward. There was a sudden whirring of a motor, a wonderful sound, pulsating with life such as had not been heard in that place for a long time and the gantry slid slowly from its place in the same way as workshop gantries move all over the world. The crane-driver, however, could not restrain his feelings and although the crane was carrying nothing and was not going for anything, but was

just testing out its strength, he kept ringing his bell all the time like gay silvery laughter that came rippling down from above. One of the women who was scrubbing the floor picked up her floor rag and without noticing what she was doing wiped her eyes with it.

"This was in Moskvichov's shop. I can not write anything about this man, as I had no opportunity to chat with him—he was too busy. But one thing I do know—that he's one of the most remarkable engineers in this plant and has been working heroically ever since the first day of the return.

I managed to get A. F. Medvedev to spare me half an hour and here is the gist of what he told me. Before the invasion Medvedev had been the manager of the mould-making shop. He prepared the dough from which the moulds were formed. Despite the fact that he was no longer young, Medvedev was one of those people who are usually sinewy and dry, who cannot remain quiet and therefore always appear young. His quick intelligence and his ability to keep going forward tirelessly were just what were required for the stormy activities of those difficult days.

He had been on one of the most dangerous and difficult jobs—the transport of the factory's property across the Volga.

"A Spanish fortune-teller once told me I would live to be a hundred. So far she's been right. My jacket was wounded in fourteen places and I not in one!"

It is impossible even to imagine what happened at the river crossing. Without gang planks they loaded the machines, the women and children and everything else onto the barges straight from the sands—and everything under a constant hail of fire. The worst moment of all had been when the oil reservoirs which stood nearby caught fire as the result of a direct hit. The burning oil ran in streams towards the river driving the people apart, setting fire to their goods and chattels, threatening with death anybody who could not jump out of its way.

The black smoke choked and blinded them. The river was on fire. The wooden barges loaded with people and machinery were likely to catch fire at any moment.

The Germans, seeing what was happening from Mamayev Kurgan, intensified their shelling. The people were more afraid

of the burning oil than they were of bombs and shells. Then another misfortune happened. The barge on which the machines were loaded keeled over to starboard. Machines slid across the deck. They pressed against the people forcing them up against the gunwale. One old woman could not hold on and fell into the water. The barge was already moving and could not be stopped, on the contrary it had to be kept under way in order to right it to some extent. Medvedev's assistant jumped into the water just as he was with his clothes on and grabbing the old woman by the kerchief around her head, held her on the surface until a boat came up.

Half way across the people on the barge saw others in the water. They were two women and a little girl. The women were hanging on to some floating object, they had tiny babes in their arms and a girl of about six years old was supporting herself. Apparently their strength was failing them. The women lifted the children up onto their shoulders trying to save them from the water, but the waves kept splashing the tiny mites who cried terribly. Several people from the barge without waiting for any orders jumped into the Volga, life-belts were thrown into the water and the unfortunate people were pulled on board.

"In one night we would ferry across from three thousand to four thousand people and I can assure you that we always disembarked as many as we embarked. There was only one instance of failure and that was when we disembarked one person more than we took on board. One of the women gave birth on board the barge on the way across."

Having organized the crossing, Medvedev went to the town of N. with a train-load of machinery; on the way their train was bombed. But even here Medvedev showed himself master of the situation. The train was not damaged, only the railway line suffered. There were rails and rivets on the train and Medvedev organized a break-down gang, the line was quickly repaired and the train went on.

"Everybody was safe and sound! We even put on weight on the journey—the air of the steppe is good for the health. And we learnt to lay railway lines—that came in very handy later."

He returned to the factory immediately after the Germans had been routed. There was absolutely nothing for him to do

in the mould-making shop. He thought out some work for himself. Transport—that was what he had decided to take up without waiting for any instructions. Transport was necessary first of all because all that rubbish which hindered their movements and their activities had to be cleared away from the factory.

The railway lines, however, were smashed to smithereens. Medvedev drew up a map showing all the damage and it turned out that on the average there was a shell hole for every five metres of railway track. All the locomotives were out of action and were a sorry sight standing there one behind the other covered in snow and gashed with long tears of holes.

Medvedev organized a repair shop. On March 22nd, 1943, at 5 p.m. the first engine whistle for seven months sounded over the factory. That was just as the evening shift was coming on. Engine number 3165 was stoked up and ran out along the factory lines. The boilers had been filled with buckets because the water main was still not working.

"Now I'm chief railway engineer here. According to the Spanish fortune-teller I still have a long time to live so that I shall be able to do other things yet."

9

Georgi Lagerev was a man of entirely different mould from Medvedev. Very calm, slow, somewhat pedantic even, he was the chief of the central precision-instrument laboratory of the factory. If it is true that a man's profession is part of his character then he was proof of it. Measurement does not permit of hurry or improvisation. It requires the accurate hand, the sharp eye and the calm mind.

Lagerev came to me dead on the appointed time and laying his watch down in front of him began his story without emotion, without going back and without any errors in style. I immediately realized that I need not worry, he would not omit anything important and I would not need to ask him questions.

When Lagerev returned from the East where, on instructions of the management he had taken the equipment, the factory was already in the hands of the Germans. He hunted up the director on the left bank of the Volga and with all the proper formality reported on his journey. Pressing his hand as he said good-bye

the director asked him whether he was acquainted with any people who knew the layout of the factory workshops and were bold enough to carry out a dangerous mission. He thought for a while weighing up the qualities of a man whom he knew well enough and said that amongst those of his acquaintances such a task could be entrusted to Georgi Lagerev.

He was sent to an army unit and there he got the necessary instructions. The Germans had built a number of strong firing positions on the factory territory, all of which had, with one exception, been destroyed by our artillery. This one we had not managed to discover and it was doing considerable harm to our units. It was essential to get into the factory and find it.

"This operation," Lagerev told me, "was one of the most difficult in all my experience because I was a regular dilettante in the scouting profession. I therefore tried to imagine all the possible processes that might arise in the course of the operation. I came to the conclusion that in the event of a failure armed resistance in the enemy's lines would hardly be considered expedient. I therefore gave up the idea of taking any weapons. In the event of a failure the only way of getting out of the Germans' hands and of getting back again would be to disguise myself as one of the inhabitants who had remained with the Germans. With the aid of some people who knew the ropes I made myself a set of documents covered with all the possible German signs and symbols. We had samples of this German office work in our possession. I dressed myself in the commonest suit possible, put on an old worn out overcoat and neglected my usual shave. I thought that I had allowed for all the details of the operation, but as you know, practice often introduces correction into theoretical considerations. Now I know that at that time, I forgot one of the most important things. The absence of this thing could have led to the collapse of the whole operation, to say nothing of my own death.

"We went out onto the bank of the River Mehotka along which the front-line ran. It was dark, warm and misty. I had a comrade with me also from the factory. Soldiers took us to the bridge, whose construction was well known to me, gave us our last instructions on how to

get through the line of the Germans' outer defences and informed me of the pass-word. We went down into the gully. The snow was deep and it was difficult to move from one pile of the bridge when we found it to another but we were certain that the enemy would not discover us. In this way we reached the other bank of the gully and climbed up the bank. Soon we came to a small cliff. This meant we were 57 metres from the northern corner of shop No. 25. I crept out of the gully under cover of transformer station No. 48.

"The transformer-housing was wrecked and bits of masonry lay on the floor and crunched underfoot. The light of the stars was enough for me to distinguish foot-prints in the snow. For a preliminary orientation this is very important. I tried to decide on the degree of importance of this path by its width and the extent to which the snow was trodden down. The path was mostly used from the brick kilns, where I noticed several bricks that I knew had fallen there quite recently as there was no snow on them.

"The path led away to the greenhouses but was lost in the darkness some twenty-five metres ahead.

"My comrade called me and he began to climb out of the gully in the direction of the transformer-station. At that moment about fifteen metres away from us a sub-machine-gun suddenly began firing. The bullets whistled over our head. We later learned that the sentries fired a burst from time to time instead of calling to each other, but at the time we did not know it and thought they were firing at us. Within fifteen minutes, however, we had a very good idea of the positions of all the German posts.

"We crawled out of the transformer-station in the direction of the press shop. We were now certain that the path led right up to the greenhouse at the end of which I clearly saw the silhouette of some sort of a building that had not been there when we were in the factory. The path was joined by another, more used than the first, but with traces of sleighs and not wheel tracks. Just then the Germans began to fire rockets. They fired them every three minutes and their methodicalness helped us. The intervals allowed us to crawl from one cover to another in the darkness and the flares lit up the area, and we would take our bearings and make ob-

servations with the greatest accuracy. We lay behind a stack of metal girders which had been intended for the construction of a sub-station of the press shop of our factory.

"We lay there more than an hour.

"Five groups of Germans passed us dragging sledges loaded with mortar bombs and boxes of cartridges. They followed the path leading to the greenhouse. We now had no doubt that the building we had seen was the fire position we were looking for. They had taken bricks there and now they were taking ammunition there.

"We crawled out of cover and began to move perpendicular to the greenhouse path. On the way I carefully took bearings and determined the exact coordinates to within one metre.

"Dawn was near. We wanted to get our information to headquarters and had to hurry. We therefore went back almost openly, at full height. We felt so calm that we ourselves were astonished. I should say that this was a kind of joy, presumably from a feeling of having fulfilled our mission. In addition to this there was another reason which was urging-us on.

"We soon reached the bridge and our patrol asked us for the pass-word.

"Magazine," we whispered hoarsely as though we were being strangled.

"It was later seen that all our information was quite accurate and our artillery had no difficulty in blowing up the German blockhouse."

The chief of the precision-instruments laboratory finished with this phrase and picking his watch up from the table put it in his pocket. This meant that the interview was at an end.

I could contain myself no longer and asked him about that which had been interesting me all the while he had been talking:

"Tell me, please, what was it that you did not foresee when you set out on your 'gauging operation?'"

Lagerev laughed.

"Tablets," he said, "cough tablets! As soon as we crawled into the transformer-station we wanted to cough, my throat itched as though there were a flea in it. The whole night we were tormented by the desire to cough, and we simply ran back throwing all caution to the winds in order to have a good, hearty cough.

When you go out on a reconnoissance, remember your respiratory canal."

He went away. I knew that he was very busy and did not detain him.

10

Once I went through that part of the factory where work had not yet begun on cleaning up the rubbish. One even came across German bodies there. I saw two legs sticking, motionless, out of a pile of debris. I turned to call somebody when the legs made a motion like those of a swimmer and wormed their way out. A man in overalls that were all covered in plaster crawled out from under the stones. In his hands he was holding some kind of calipers and a steel ruler.

He introduced himself. He was Samokhin, mechanic and tool-maker. He took me to the workshop that he had himself rigged up in a part of the factory dining-room that had escaped the bombing. The whole place was neat and tidy. On the stands along the wall lay calipers, gauging tools, scribing blocks and other measuring instruments shining with oil and polished metal. Several men were polishing instruments on steel surface plates.

Samokhin had been one of the first to return to the factory. He started work despite the frosts, the mines and the emptiness all around him. At the risk of his life and without any assistance he dug away the snow and crawled under the debris in search of measuring instruments. He salvaged many useful things.

This is what Samokhin told me about himself.

He lived with his wife in a settlement on the bank of the Volga. When the Germans attacked the factory he took part in its defence like the other workers, and was then ordered to take some of the gauging instruments to the left bank of the river and accompany them to the East. He loaded the packing cases onto a truck and sent them to the river crossing, then hurried to his wife in order to take her with him. But his wife worked in another factory and had that day been ordered to pack the valuable property of her factory. She could not go away. They did not want to part and he tried to persuade her to leave the factory and

go with him. Under no circumstances would his wife agree.

"Why don't you leave your factory?" she objected resolutely.

They agreed to meet at their home tomorrow and come to a decision.

He went away.

On the far bank his work was held up by terrific bombing, and Samokhin, lying in a trench, looked across the river at the city and the factories. He saw swarms of German aircraft attacking the factory, he saw the bombs bursting in the workshops, he saw our fighters fly into that hellish smoke which spread over the whole sky, and from there came the rattle of machine-gun fire. The factory where his wife was employed was not far away. Suddenly a terrific explosion took place there, the roar of which rolled across the river, reverberating and magnified by the constant echo. The workshops were in flames. There were no people to be seen, and of course at that distance it would not have been possible to distinguish his wife who was no doubt there at that moment. Perhaps she was already at home? Samokhin turned his eyes towards his settlement which was situated between the two blazing factories. The settlement was also in flames.

Night fell, red from the conflagrations; morning came, and all those long hours Samokhin lay in the trench watching. It was his life that was burning, and the Volga, blood-red from the fires, lay before him dividing his past from the ghastly present hour.

In the morning he continued his work and at midday again crossed to the factory. What had happened to his wife, whether she was alive, whether he could leave her alone in that blaze, what would happen to her without him—he did not know.

Before going to see her he reported to the factory management on the work he had done since morning. They told him straight away that he would not go to the East yet awhile, but would continue loading machinery in the factory.

This meant he would stay, meant they would be together! His heart was easier as he ran home. The house was still standing and his wife was still alive. She greeted him joyfully.

"I'm going!" she shouted to him from the doorstep. "I'm to take the blueprints to the Urals."

He stopped at the gate and with his head bowed he walked toward her. He told her of the new plan.

Then she pinched his cheek as she always did when she wanted to say something nice to him, and smiled.

"We promised that we would die together, and if we are parting that means we shall not die."

He couldn't even be angry with her when she said such nice things. How fine and dependable she was as she stood there before him!

They began to get together the things that she had to take with her. The more they sorted things out the bigger the pile grew. Everything was dear to her, everything seemed essential, and most of all, all of this was their life. They recalled their life in all these small things and it seemed to have been so happy just as though there had never been any sorrow in it. Everyone of these little things had been both witness and evidence of that happiness.

"Let's bury everything," she said, "that's what the neighbours are doing."

He laughed. The things these women think of! Bury all their property when all they had was half an hour to spare. And furthermore however they may bury it what was safe in this hell when the bombs were falling within a yard of each other?

"Drop it," he said, "forget that nonsense."

"It's not nonsense! How shall we live without our things when we come back?"

He made a gesture with his hand. "Come back." "We shall live." Were these appropriate words for the time? She was still a girl although they regarded her as a responsible worker at the factory.

But she had already run out into the garden and had begun to dig. She paid no further attention to him. He stood looking at her and in his heart he was deeply offended. These were the last minutes before they parted. They might even be the last minutes they ever spent together. And because of some caprice, because of some strange whim of hers these minutes had to be spent in senseless fussing when there wasn't even time to say a word or two.

In silence he helped her dig a pit and bury a huge chest in it. He was angry with her and could not tell her what he was thinking.

"I think that's all," she said, getting up from her knees. "We haven't forgotten anything?"

Then, feeling himself insulted he went into the house and took down his accordion, on which he was an excellent player. With great deliberation and even with an ironical bow he laid it in the chest on top of everything else. This did not seem good enough and he took a lot of cotton wool and packed it around the accordion. The ridiculousness of such an action was already obvious to him. His wife apparently did not realize the irony of it.

They parted in a hurry. There was no time left for the words they should have said to each other at such a moment.

A few days later he left for the East. Where his wife was and whether she was alive he did not know.

At the beginning of February the radio told him that Stalingrad had been liberated. Samokhin set out for home. By home he meant his own factory for he considered himself a sober-minded enough man not to believe that his house was still standing. And that's how things apparently were. He had no sooner arrived than acquaintances who had formerly lived in the settlement told him that his house had been burnt down.

He did not go there. Everything was painful and sad to his memory, especially the last minute before he parted from his wife.

He settled down in the factory and became what he was when I first met him—a bold hunter and salvager of instruments.

There are; however, those moments in life when fatigue, or sorrow, or a dim sub-conscious idea suddenly overshadows a resolution that has been made, and a man despite himself does that which he did not want to. One evening Samokhin found himself in the settlement. He was wandering about alone, stumbling over stones lying in the road, banging his head against wires hanging over the streets.

He recognized the street crossing where he lived by the electric-power pylon which was now lying athwart the road. Glancing to the right he made sure that

his neighbours had told him the truth: there was nothing where his house had stood except a heap of debris and a chimney which still stuck up into the air. Suddenly he heard the clang of iron. He walked forward and in the twilight of the frosty evening he saw a woman with a spade in her hand. There could be no mistake—it was his wife.

She took him by the cheek and said: "Why are you without a spade, Andreyka?"

Tears were shining in her eyes, however, and he realized that this time she was forcing herself to joke. Now, however, she could cry and not make a joke of it, for the calamity was over. . . they stood there in one another's arms on the heap of brick that had once been their home, all around them desolation and ashes and frosty darkness. . . but there was nobody in the world more happy than they were at that moment.

In the morning they dug up the chest. Everything was intact. On top, snugly packed in the cotton wool lay the accordion as though it had only been placed there yesterday.

He pushed his hand under the strap of the accordion, sat down on the edge of the chest and crossing one leg over the other pulled out the bellows and the instrument crashed out a march as triumphantly as if he had foreseen this moment when he packed the accordion in the chest six months before.

11

More people were coming to Stalingrad every day and life was beginning simultaneously in all parts of the city for people of all ages and all walks of life. It was spring, with the first warm sunshine and the first signs of green. And that which was being done in the city was also like spring, when a sudden and general resurgence begins everywhere and every tiny living thing, wherever it may be, does everything in its power to develop, grow and live.

Few people had come back to the city without their children. Children's voices rang out amongst the ruins before the hammers of the builders were heard. Citizens of future Five-Year Plans were in no way worried at the dismal situation in which they found themselves. Their behaviour was impossible: for

example, they completely ignored all the warning notices and crept into the most impossible places at the risk of tripping over mines that had not yet been found. The children had to be protected from danger and their care was the first thing the grown-ups had to worry about. Schools were set up immediately. They started work in the very first days after the liberation. Imagination played an important part in their existence.

In the mornings I met school-children hurrying to their lessons. One day I went with them. We came to an imaginary fence, passed through an imaginary gate and went upstairs to an imaginary classroom. In reality it was a landing on the second floor of which only one wall was left. On the cleanly-swept concrete floor stood tables of various calibre and skeleton-like chairs. On the wall hung a piece of blue linoleum in place of the school blackboard and a map of the hemispheres with a charred North Pole. A lot of children gathered in the classroom, about seventy of them, and what was more astonishing—all of different ages. When the teacher arrived everything was explained. Insofar as it was only possible to hold classes in one place in the school and as there was only one teacher, all the classes were merged together. While the youngest ones were busy copying some written task, those a little older were drawing, those still older wrote composition and the teacher was giving a lesson to another class a little further away. Then the children told me that they not only have lessons. They were gradually clearing their school from rubble and rubbish, they themselves swept the floor of their only classroom and even dug flower beds in front of the school building in order to plant flowers there.

In another district I saw a school organized in a different way. Here not even the ruins of the school building remained. Therefore some sort of order had been established in a number of little cottages which had been saved by a miracle. The teachers went from street to street to give their lessons and one elderly teacher I saw had a time-table of his lessons drawn up in the form of a map where "his halts" as he called his classes were all charted.

The first few months in Stalingrad were difficult as far as such things as 63

sugar and butter were concerned because transport was still not fully restored, could not cope with the mass of freight coming there from all parts of the country. In every food-store, however, there were separate shelves dressed with special care on which there were tinned goods, jars of jam and boxes of dried fruit and sugar. These were for the children. The city gave them the best it had at the time. The children who had suffered so much during the German offensive rapidly began to recover.

"Watch over them, for they shall inherit the earth. . ." an old man, a former priest said to me; when I met him he was legal adviser to one of the concerns in the city. These old words had a special meaning now: we were talking about the earth which was far too dear to hand over to weak and feeble inheritors.

12

During the first months after the defeat of the Germans the city was almost deserted. Districts which had from thirty thousand to fifty thousand inhabitants now had no more than fifty souls. I saw the organization of the first bakeries in the cellars, the first dining-rooms in which there were neither windows nor crockery, the first shops into which you had to crawl as though you were going into a dugout. I saw the first postman hand a letter to an old woman who was living in a pit amongst the ruined houses; and I saw some guardsmen come to look at the first militiaman who stood on the square where not so long before they had been crawling and shooting, fighting for every inch of that asphalt. They stood in front of the militiaman and smiled and he smiled back apparently at the strangeness of his peaceful job.

There was nothing bombastic about all this but it was all very unusual and the particular significance which was attached to even the simplest things made one think of the great price that had been paid for them. Yes, now we would know the price of all the small things in our lives, would love everything that is ours a thousand times more and would retain the memory of these years for a long time to come. May the consciousness of the blood and calamities which had paid for every foot of that pavement, for every yard of the telegraph line never

be overshadowed by the cares of a new day when the next generation comes to take our places and with the carefree attitude of youth will naively believe that things have been like this from time immemorial and that it has cost no more than that which is entered up in the records of capital investments.

When we speak of the Motherland does that mean only the riches which we possess, the earth on which we live, its beauty, or does it mean the names of those who made it, or the greatness of its culture?

No, not only this.

The Motherland is everything that our fathers have made and handed down to us as an inheritance. The pages of a book lead us through events of which a gigantic summary has been made, there we meet only the titans, be they soldiers, scientists, politicians, or artists. . . . There everything is carved in bronze, everything majestically perpetuated in emblems and dates so that looking back we can hardly see how our millions of ancestors suffered in their tiny insignificant lives, how terrible and sorrowful were the pictures of ruin and calamity, how people in the desert places began anew to build a future for themselves and for their children.

And incidentally what was that future? It was you and I, the people now living. Men died on Borodino Field, so that the rivers ran red with blood and our fathers marched so bravely along Vladimírka¹ because they were thinking of us, thinking of the future Russia.

The same thing is happening in our generation.

Not only because of themselves, but for the sake of our successors the people are shedding their blood and are able to withstand the tremendous calamities of this war. How can we be sure that our successors will not only read in the textbooks what great victories there were, but will really know in their hearts what unhappiness was paid for their happy lives. How those towns in which they will live in bright and spacious houses lay in heaps of grey ashes, how their coevals perished before being born

¹ Vladimírka is the name of an old highroad running from central Russia to Siberia. It was along this road that in tsarist days many a political prisoner was marched to exile in Siberia.—*Ed.*

instead of sharing their joy on the peaceful native earth.

How can we make their consciousness of all this as clear and aware as our own who have witnessed and taken part in the great struggle?

This must be done not in order to win their gratitude and not for our glorifi-

Translated by G. Hanna

GREAT HEARTS

They did not take part in any dashing attacks, they did not cross the Dnieper in yaws under fire nor did they fight the enemy on burning tanks. In short, they did not do anything that is known as battle heroism. All of them were just plain Ukrainian women, busy with their everyday household duties, and yet they were true heroines of the war.

One evening, Vera Sakhno, a native of the town of Lyubotin, while working in her garden, happened to witness an uneven air combat: one of our fighters engaged in the pursuit of some enemy bombers, flew far into the German-occupied zone. There he was at once engaged by three Messerschmitts. Accepting the challenge he fought valiantly against the three, cleverly dodging their attacks and attacking them in his turn. Leaning on her shovel Vera Sakhno stood there and watched the battle, her heart in her mouth. One of the enemy planes was shot down, but our fighter-plane caught fire too. It careened to the right and started dropping to the ground leaving a trail of smoke behind it. Suddenly a black dot detached itself from the plane and a tiny dim cloud appeared over it. The cloud soon turned into an open parachute, and the pilot, hanging in the straps, began slowly to descend over the very roofs of the houses of a German-occupied town. Barely missing the tree tops, the pilot landed right near Vera Sakhno and fell motionless to the ground.

The woman was well aware that hundreds of people, both enemies and friends, were watching the landing from the ground, that the Germans surely must have seen where the Soviet pilot landed. She also knew that they would make a thorough search for him and leave no stone unturned until they found him and that giving shelter to and concealing a Russian soldier meant death and the arrest of the family of the one who dared to disobey strict German orders. All this Vera Sakhno knew only too well, but it did not even enter her mind, as she looked at the Soviet pilot, Lieutenant Kireyev, lying beside her, gravely wounded and burned. Disdaining the danger she tried to bring the pilot to, thinking of one thing only—how to hide and save him from the revenge of the Germans.

It is in such moments that even weak, inexperienced people become strong and resourceful. Picking up the wounded pilot, she carried him in her arms towards a shed in the garden, laid him down on a pile of fresh hay, put some boards and rags around the improvised bed, picked up and burned the parachute and trampled down all the tracks

cation, but so that they realize what soil it is they walk on and what it has cost.

So that they hold on to it with an irresistible firmness and value every tiny thing, not at the price of one day but at the price of all the tears and sorrows of centuries.

BORIS AGAPOV

on the ground. By the time the noise of the German police motor-cycles was heard at the door, she was standing in the kitchen peeling potatoes as if nothing had happened at all.

Has she seen a pilot? Of course not. Why, she even had not left the house all day long. She gladly invited the police to inspect the house and the garden and even offered them a cup of tea. The police inspected everything and left. Vera Sakhno immediately went to visit her patient, as she called the lieutenant.

And from that day on she did not leave his bedside for two whole weeks, bandaging his wounds and burns. A doctor was found who volunteered to secretly visit and treat the pilot, while a nurse supplied Vera Sakhno with all the needed medicines, etc. Thus the three plucky Soviet patriots, braving mortal danger, put the lieutenant on his feet.

The Germans were furious: hundreds of people witnessed the landing, they even saw the approximate spot where it had taken place. But all traces were lost, as if they had melted away somewhere among the gardens. . . Then the Germans seized several people living in that street as hostages and announced that if the pilot was not found within three days, the hostages were to be shot and the houses in that street burned to the ground. They also promised a reward to whoever would betray the pilot's hiding place, but no one turned traitor. The third day was about to expire, and an atmosphere of tense expectation gripped the people living in the threatened street. But the Germans failed to carry out their threat, for it was on that very day that the Red Army entered Lyubotin.

As the advance unit of the Red Army entered the town, it was met by a happy woman standing at the door of her house and proudly supporting the wounded Red Army pilot, Lieutenant Kireyev, who could by now stand on his feet again and whose life she had saved at the risk of her own. Thanks to her he was saved from death and from something worse than death—from the clutches of the Germans.

Darnitsa village in Kharkov region was still far behind the German lines so that the roar of the long-range guns hardly reached it. One fine evening two peasant women of that village, Ekaterina Bakulenko and her daughter Dunya were suddenly confronted by several Red Army men, who emerged ghost-like from between some rustling corn stalks. At first the women could not believe their eyes: here, far behind the German lines, stood several Soviet fighters wearing their insignia and carrying

arms, in the best of spirits and full of good cheer. For a few moments they gazed at each other in wondering silence and then one of the fighters explained to the women:

"Mother, we're scouts, understand?" And when the woman cried out with joy and rushed towards him, he put his finger to his lips and said: "Hush, mother! Ours is important business and it must be attended to without any noise!"

Mother and daughter welcomed Sergeant Timoshchuk's scouting group. To the cornfield where they lay in concealment they brought them the tastiest things they could find and gave them detailed information concerning the number and the location of the Germans.

Towards evening the scouts had obtained all the intelligence they needed, but Sergeant Timoshchuk was not satisfied: he now wanted to get hold of a "tongue" and Dunya volunteered to help him. She told him that the Germans would soon be going for supper and pointed out a spot convenient for an ambush. Then she went to meet the Germans, and selecting the smallest one among them—so that it would be easier to drag him—she addressed him by signs. The German remained behind the rest and at this moment the scouts stole up behind, seized and gagged him, hauled him to the women's hut and took him up to the attic.

They decided to wait for nightfall before taking him back with them. But here they made a mistake, for the Germans became worried and began searching for their lost companion. They recalled that he had stopped to talk to Dunya and broke into Bakulenko's hut. In the meantime the scouts had hidden in the attic. The Germans began to question the women, who acted like hospitable hosts, and even treated the Germans to milk and flatbread. Dunya herself helped them in their search, running out into the yard and calling the German by his name.

Meanwhile the German lay upstairs tied hand and foot. He could hear every word of the conversation and tried to signal to his companions, but the scouts held him tightly. At night, when everything was quiet, Dunya took the scouts along a round-about path, led them out behind the German outposts and wished them good luck and a speedy return. Indeed, they returned soon, but this time it was with the advancing Red Army.

Sophia Krivchinova of Kleimyonovo village accomplished her heroic deed under much more difficult conditions. A company of our advance troops forced their way into the village but were met by German tanks and had to retreat, leaving several wounded in the streets and gardens. The Germans, who temporarily entrenched in the village, started finishing them off in cold blood in full sight of the population. Two of the wounded—Sergeant Vesselov and

Private Skrynin, were lying in a patch of sunflowers behind the Krivchinov home and Sophia resolved to save them. She carried them into her house, placed them on a feather-bed mattress in the store-room and covered the entrance to it with all kinds of rags. But to her misfortune a German tank crew was billeted in her house and as the wounded men lay behind a thin wall she could only bring them food at night, while the Germans were asleep.

It so happened that one of the villagers set fire to a German munition dump. The Germans were enraged and shot the first inhabitants they happened to lay hands on. The rest were ordered to leave the village. Before leaving Sophia Krivchinova managed to hand a few loaves of bread, some cucumbers and pickled tomatoes to the two wounded men. She was already outside the village when she suddenly recalled that she had forgotten to leave them some water. In the deep of the night this middle-aged woman made her way across gardens and along paths known to her since childhood, slipped by several sentries and reaching her house she handed a jar of water through the window to the wounded men. In doing this she braved death, for the Germans would have hanged her had she fallen into their hands. But at this moment she did not think of her life, she was thinking of the two wounded fighters, whose names she had not even asked, but who were as dear to her as her own children.

Later on she made her way across the front-line, went to the commander of our unit holding that sector and begged him to recapture the village as soon as possible, as her wounded men lay there. The commander, an old soldier, looked at the woman radiant with noble emotion, and tears came to his eyes. The recapture of the village happened to be one of the items in his plan. And so he promised the woman to fulfil her request. He asked her for details as to the number and location of the Germans, and in the morning his battalion, led by the woman along roads well known to her, burst into the village.

The fighting was still in progress, the bullets whistling by and shells exploding and shattering the wooden houses, when Sophia Krivchinova reached her house, removed the rags and let light and air into the store-room. The war and the shells did not matter at this moment, the battalion would take care of that. The main thing was that the wounded, her wounded, were saved from German revenge, that they were well, smiling and alive.

What these women have done is no exception, it is an everyday matter in this sacred, people's war. Many such cases remain unknown because true heroes are modest and consider their deeds as nothing out of the ordinary.

B. POLEVOY

BOOKS AND WRITERS

BORIS GORBATOV, THE INFANTRYMAN OF LITERATURE

Late autumn, 1941. The enemy is advancing on Moscow. In the early dusk the sky over the Soviet capital is criss-crossed with searchlights; AA guns are barking.

The dark streets smothered in drifts of early snow are intersected by barricades. Detachments of people in their everyday clothes march by with firm, precise step, the men with rifles, the women with spades. These are some of the thousands of Moscow citizens who are going to defend the Soviet capital, to fight side by side with the Red Army, to dig trenches and anti-tank ditches.

And over the tense and expectant city the voice of the radio-announcer sounds out strong and clear:

"Comrade. . . I love life, and that is why I am going now to fight. I am going to fight for life, for a real life and not a slave's existence, comrade! To fight for the happiness of my children, for the happiness of my country, for my own happiness. I love life, but I shall not be sparing of it. I love life, but I do not fear death. To live like a soldier, and die like a soldier—this is what I understand by life."

These words were written by Boris Gorbato^v, a young Soviet author, who was fighting that autumn on the Southern front. His *Letters to a Comrade*, short articles, a clarion call to battle, as inspiring as a song, were being widely read then in the army, were printed in *Pravda*, and broadcast over the air. The Red Army man in the Donets Basin carried the *Letters* in his field pouch, people listened to them on the near approaches to Moscow, in besieged Leningrad, everywhere where Soviet people fought, where they stood and died, people who were those very comrades whom Gorbato^v was addressing. In the passionate words of the *Letters* they found an echo to their own feelings, to their bitterness and their dauntless courage, their pain and their passionate will to fight and to conquer.

Even then Boris Gorbato^v was known and loved in the U.S.S.R. as writer, arctic explorer, and as an officer, who was decorated as early as the Finnish campaign.

Boris Gorbato^v's best pre-war book was the collection of stories called *Everyday Arctic*. The hero of these tales was a Soviet explorer who loved his work and life, a builder and a scientist. He fought to subdue the elemental forces of nature to will and reason, to establish firmly the new way of life in the most distant corners of the country.

And the same hero, proud, energetic and capable, we meet with in Gorbato^v's books written during the war.

Great trials fell to the lot of this hero at the front and in the rear and over there, behind the enemy's lines, over there where that "despot of a day," the invader, the German fascist, has instituted his reign of terror.

How Soviet people suffer and struggle under the German yoke is the theme of Boris Gorbato^v's new story *Unbowed* (*Taras' Family*¹).

Taras Yatsenko's family was an ordinary Soviet family. Taras himself was a worker, of worker stock, a highly-skilled metal-worker, a still hale and hearty at sixty. He and his wife had brought up a big family. The youngest daughter Nastya was just finishing high school, two sons, Andrei and Nikifor, had also been skilled workers in the factory before the war, and the third, Stepan, was one of the leading men in his district. There were also daughters-in-law working. Little grandchildren were growing up. In the terrible and bitter days of the autumn of 1941, when the Red Army was retreating eastward, Taras was the only man left in the household and had to take on himself the responsibility for the life and safe-keeping of the women and children left in his care. The Germans were entering the town. Taras' first idea, his first reaction, was to sit tight and lie low during the period of occupation. Not to work with the enemy or for the enemy (he, like every other true patriot, could not conceive of doing such a thing), but to hide in the home with his family behind lock and key as though in a fortress and so hold out till the return of the Soviet army. But how could he hold out? As yet the enemy's tiger paw had not reached Taras' family. Nobody in the house had yet been tortured, seized, robbed or carried off to slavery in Germany. But all the same it was impossible to go on living. Not only because any day such a fate might overtake the Yatsenko family too. But also because the invader had closed all roads, suppressed all signs of life. Young Nastya had finished high school, but what was she to do now? How were Taras' grandchildren, Mariika and Lyonka, to continue their schooling in the germanized school which had become a field for the application of the "race theory," an offshoot of the Gestapo?

And Taras' wife, the old woman Evfrosinya, where was she to turn with her grief, when the Germans made mock of her and her faith, and set up a drunken billiard-marker in church as priest? And what was Taras himself to do, with his clever worker's hands pining in idleness?

The Germans did not beat Taras' daughter-in-law, the timid Antonina, but right before her eyes they mercilessly beat one of her workmates, an old engineer well-known to the whole town. The Germans did not murder Taras' little granddaughter Mariika, but right before her eyes they murdered a little Jewish girl whom all the people of that part of the town had hidden by turns in their homes. Even when the fascists do not kill or cripple the body, they try to kill or cripple the spirit, to bow the backs of people who had walked proud and free on their own native soil, to

¹ An excerpt from this book was published in our issue No. 11 of 1943.—Ed.

instill into them despair, fear, hopelessness.

And old Taras began to realize that he would not be able to "sit tight" through it all. To sacrifice one's human dignity, to save one's life would be a crime, treachery. Even if you did save it, you would never be able to hold up your head again.

And Taras decided: if he couldn't lie low, then he'd fight. And thus began the silent, hidden warfare of peaceful, even quite unarmed Russian people with the invaders.

"Not to submit"—it was not so simple, the more so that the "garrison" of Taras' home fortress did not seem to be well adapted for struggle. Grandma was old, the children small, Antonina was timid. And Nastya? What was hidden behind the silence of this eighteen-year-old girl who suddenly, to her great misfortune, had flowered into beauty during the terrible days of occupation? Taras was a little bit chary of belief in the young: they had grown up in peaceful times, times happy for their country and for themselves. Would they stand firm now, when the time of great trial had come? One of Nastya's friends was already going with German officers, had curled golden ringlets on her forehead and called herself not Lisa but Luisa. But at the same time Taras learned that Masha, another friend of Nastya's, whom he remembered as a little laughing barefoot girl, had been put in prison by the Germans for distributing leaflets. And a warm feeling of respect and trust for the young flooded the old man's heart.

The family lived by "non-submission." Mariika and Lyonka stopped going to school, grandma Evfrossinya no longer went to church, Antonina cautiously began sabotaging her work, some mystery that Taras could not penetrate shrouded the life of the silent Nastya. And Taras himself, summoned to the German Labour Exchange as a highly qualified worker celebrated among the townsfolk for his skill, refused to work, declared himself a labourer. Every morning Taras would put on indescribable old rags and escorted by a policeman would go, along with other old skilled workers, the cream of the factory, to do navy's work, demonstrating their contempt for the newly installed directors and their yes-men.

But now the first blow fell on Taras. His youngest son Andrei, whom he thought to be fighting at the front, returned home. He returned from a German prison camp. Andrei was no fascist hanger-on, not one of the police, not an enemy of his people. He hated the Germans who had subjected him to humiliation and torture as a prisoner. But he had not resisted "to the death," he had thrown down the weapons entrusted him by the people, he had not had, as Taras said, "the righteousness to die for his country." And he had come home not to carry on the struggle against the Germans in the rear, but to take refuge in his home, to be with his wife and child.

According to the stern judgement of Taras, Andrei was a traitor, to him he was an outcast, a limb severed from the honest family of the "unbowed." Taras knew that there were only two ways, either the way of treachery or the way of struggle. All "fine considerations," all attempts to find a third path, a compromise, would not allow a man to escape the final choice.

But soon after his return home Andrei himself saw that there was no home life left. To little Mariika he was a stranger "not like daddy." Antonina was worn out with sorrow and dread, in the home there was hunger and want, all his family were living the life of the "unbowed", a life in which he had no part.

And one day when Taras loaded the household goods and chattels onto a wheel-barrow and went off to the village to exchange them for food for his starving family, Andrei also left. He had decided to cross the front-line, make his way to the Red Army and redeem his cowardice in battle.

Taras went with his wheel-barrow along the roads of his native land, the once happy, bounteous and free Ukraine. And before him rose an appalling picture of universal grief, misfortune, ruin. Not only the townsfolk were starving, the villagers were starving too. The Germans had fastened like vampires onto the tortured, burned-out land. They had stripped it of everything down to the last hen, the last grain of wheat, the last apple. Harassed, hungry fellow townsmen, a hair-dresser, an accountant, a famous barytone of the Kharkov opera, went along with Taras, searching for undestroyed countryside. And they saw that there was no "undestroyed" countryside, but "indomitable" spirits there were. Hatred for the invaders seethed in the people, though it had not yet found proper vent. The feeling of comradeship and brotherhood was alive; the hungry peasants were ready to share their last crumb with the hungry townsfolk. The people of an Ukrainian village took upon themselves the care of the sick and exhausted Kharkov singer. And how they listened to his songs!

In his wanderings Taras found one of the organizers, the gatherers of "indomitable" spirits. He turned out to be Taras' eldest son, Stepan.

In the chapters telling about Stepan's underground work we see the inner, hidden life of those districts of the Soviet Union temporarily occupied by the Germans. Thousands and scores of thousands of people of all ages, in all walks of life, waged a secret, implacable war against the Germans.

The young radio-fan, in secrecy and at risk of his life, listened in to the Moscow broadcasts and then on an ink-spattered page of his school exercise-book wrote denials of the lying fabrications of Hitlerite propaganda. Unknown hands hoisted a red flag on the parachute tower. In spite of all their threats and repressive measures the Germans could not get grain from the collective farms, could not find enough workers. Stepan's job was to weave together loose strands, to create out of scattered people and detachments a united organization, a single network, which would strangle the life out of the invaders.

"At first Stepan found the new way very hard and beset with bitter trials. He had to change everything—his name, his appearance, his voice, his way of walking. With apparent indifference he had to look at the gallows where the bodies of his comrades were swinging. He had to endure with outward calm the fascists' outrageous behaviour. He had to forget that he had ever walked about his native land as its master, that he had been a builder and a creator. But the deeper he penetrated into the

real, secret life of the district, the more threads came together in his hands, the wider and more organized grew the underground partisan struggle the clearer it became to Stepan that he, sentenced to death by the Germans, he, trailed by fascist sleuths, remained still master in his own country. He remained master because, in spite of all the invaders' hopes and efforts, there was still deeply embedded in Soviet people's hearts and deeds the Soviet order they had themselves created."

Stepan learned much in this new work of his. He came to see from a new angle people whose every habit, every twist and turn of character he thought he knew through and through. It brought him no little disillusionment. Not all were able to pass with honour through the trial by fire and blood. Some proved to be cowards, scoundrels, traitors. But scores and hundreds of thousands remained true, were steeled in the struggle for their country, rose to heights of epic heroism that astonished the world.

Night. Stepan and Taras met at a camp-fire. That night a new active fighter joined the ranks of Stepan's underground army—his old father. Instructions for his future work he was to receive from his daughter Nastya. And only now Taras learned what course Nastya had chosen, whence came the inner strength that sustained his reserved and silent daughter.

But the father was not destined to meet his young leader. The first thing that Taras saw when he returned to his native town was a gallows and swinging from it his daughter's body.

Great was Taras' grief. But he was not broken. Nastya's death only added to the score the enemy would have to pay. The Red Army was advancing, was already approaching the town. Taras went out to meet the victorious Soviet troops and their commanders. "Comrade Commander, I can look you and your men straight in the eyes. I and my family we have not failed our country. . . ." He had the right to speak thus. Taras and his grandson Lyonka, the two men of the Yatsenko family who were left in the German rear, went out along with all the remaining male population of the town to settle scores with the Germans for all their miseries and humiliations. Wounded by a German bullet, Taras fell. And as he lost consciousness, he urged his grandson who was throwing a grenade: "Let them have it, Lyonka, let them have it!"

Andrei too entered the town along with the Red Army. But it was not the old Andrei, wretched and embittered. He had battled his way with the Red Army the whole distance from the Volga to the Dnieper. Handing his father a medal he had won for gallantry, he asked him to keep it and left his home to drive the enemy further, drive them further and further till not a single invader should remain within the confines of his native land.

The last chapters of the book are concerned with the lot of Taras' third son, Nikifor. Nikifor, a stout and loyal soldier, became an invalid as a result of a serious wound received at Stalingrad. It was hard for Nikifor to reconcile himself to this idea while he was in hospital, hard for him to imagine how he would go back to the factory, return to peaceful work. At last he was discharged from the hos-

pital. In the wake of the Red Army, surging in a mighty torrent westward, Nikifor made for his home town. He saw that the town would be liberated before he managed to reach it. If Taras in his tragic search for "undestroyed" country had seen a picture of the immense desolation and grief of the common people, Nikifor, passing through the same places after the advance of the Red Army, saw another, a magnificent and unforgettable picture. The tortured but unsubjugated country was rising again from the ashes before his very eyes. Life, indestructible, was stirring again, the people were coming out of the forests and hiding-places; everywhere was busy activity. People went forth to build roads and bridges as they would go to a festival, workers gathered at the charred hulks of the factory buildings, the farmers went out to plough on yesterday's battlefield.

"And Nikifor's hands itched to be busy. . . . This was no sick, tired soldier coming from the front, he was a builder. . . for such is life: wounds heal. They heal."

Thus ends the second part of Boris Gorbato's tale *Unbowed*. Perhaps Gorbato will return again to his heroes and tell of the further fortunes, the doings and days of the Yatsenko family. But they are real and alive to us now. And it is not surprising that the Russian reader loves them; they are animated by his thoughts, his feelings, his strivings. In Taras the soldier at the front and the worker in the rear recognizes the familiar features of a grandfather, a father or an uncle who is a partisan in the forests of Byelorussia or the steppes of the Ukraine, or a worker in a Urals factory or head of a Volga collective farm.

There are two traditional ways of depicting heroes in Russian literature. Some authors portray their hero in all his complexity, working out in detail and with great subtlety the traits of his character, his mentality, the whole inner and outer man. The essential quality, the spirit, of the hero shines through such a work like the light of a lamp set within some precious and intricate fretwork carving. According to the second tradition, only the essential traits of the hero are shown. Such characterizations in their human and historical quality blaze like a beacon, like a torch in the wind. It is to this second category that Boris Gorbato's art belongs.

Yes, the characters of the tale *Unbowed* are taken right from the thick of the battle and life of the present day. But, reading about Taras Yatsenko, every Russian reader is reminded of another Taras, of Gogol's hero Taras Bulba. Taras Bulba, an old-time knight "sans peur et sans reproche" lived in the same part of the Ukraine bordering on the Dnieper some 250 years before Taras Yatsenko. He was a Cossack of Zaporozhye, one of the untamable free Cossacks that escaped from the oppression of autocracy and serfdom and went to the free lands of the "Marches." There the Cossacks, like an advance-post, defended the national independence, freedom and safety of Russia from the depredations of the nomads of the Moslem East and the feudal barons of the West.

In courage, indomitable temper, patriotism and human pride Taras Yatsenko is a descendant of Taras Bulba.

'And Boris Gorbатов himself hints at this kinship. During the conversation with Stepan on the night when Taras Yatsenko decided to take an active part in the underground struggle against the Germans, Stepan says to him:

"We come from a fine breed, father! . . . Cossacks!"

"The old man looked at his son in surprise.

"We're not Cossacks, where did you get that idea? We're not Cossacks, we're workers. Your great-granddad was a worker and your granddad and your uncles. All our family has been workers."

"But Stepan flung his arm gaily and affectionately round his shoulders.

"No, we're Cossacks, Cossacks! Don't argue, Father!"

Stepan was right because he too was a descendant of Taras Bulba and Taras Bulbas' son Ostap, the stern commander of a Cossack detachment who did not flinch from a martyr's death for Russia and his native Zaporozhskaya Sesh.

Gorbатов's book has been read by millions of Soviet readers and will be read by millions more. It is a book which will become near and dear to their hearts.

In one of his speeches Boris Gorbатов called himself an "infantryman of literature." He is right; he is one of those who are to be found in the ranks of the people's armies wherever they may march.

E. KNIPOVICH

"TOULON"

Toulon is the subject and title of a new play by the great modern French writer Jean-Richard Bloch, excellently translated into Russian by P. Antokolsky and B. Pessis.

Everybody remembers this tragically-heroic episode when the French sailors, spurning Marshal Pétain's orders, sank their fleet in the waters of the old port of Toulon rather than surrender it to the German enslavers of France.

The swift defeat of the French army, which even on the eve of the war had been considered one of the strongest in the world, will long be a riddle, one that will be finally solved only after a thorough investigation of the political processes which went on inside France between the first and second world wars. The primary interest of Jean-Richard Bloch's play for both reader and audience lies in the fact that it supplies an answer to many questions connected with the tragedy of the French people.

The author is not only well acquainted with the history of the struggle put up by the people of Toulon, but felt it most profoundly and painfully.

Jean-Richard Bloch has shown his love for his country not in words but in deeds. This is vividly illustrated by his biography.

He was a born writer. "When did you first start writing?" he was once asked. "I had barely learned to read when Molière and Musset awakened in me a passion for the theatre and I began composing something," replied Bloch. For a time, science gained a victory over his first love, and family traditions drew the youth into the world of geologists, geographers and historians, where he gained a high scientific degree and became a professor. However, his interest in literature revived again, and thirty years ago Bloch's first volume of stories appeared under the title *Levi*, followed by a play staged by Antoine theatre and his first novel ... & *Company* which he completed in 1914, on the eve of the war.

When the First World War broke out, there was no more ardent patriots among France's sons than the natives of Alsace, which had known the weight of the German yoke through the centuries. Unhesitatingly the impetuous young Alsatian, Jean-Richard Bloch, took up a rifle and joined the ranks. He received three wounds in infantry attacks, and when the war ended victoriously for France in 1918, the writer, who had entered it as a private, had the

rank of captain, the Croix de Guerre and the Order of the Légion d'honneur. Like Henri Barbusse, Jean-Richard Bloch was true to his people in times of great trial, and for this reason has the right to judge them.

The very dramatic personae of the play *Toulon* speaks for the difficulty of the task which the author set himself. In explaining the attitude of the French people to their enslavers, he strives to catch everything which stimulated people of the most varied origin to such a hard and unequal struggle.

The central figure among the French characters is the old and honoured Vice-Admiral de Fromanoir, Commander in Chief of the Toulon squadron, whose very name emphasizes his ties with the nobility. Deceived by the tricky manoeuvres of Admiral Bazir, Pétain's representative, who plays on the marshal's blind confidence and habitual sense of discipline, de Fromanoir, fundamentally an honest naval man and patriot, at the last minute awakens to the truth, and in order to save the honour of France, blows up the fleet, perishing with it. The author's theatrical art comes out in all its force in the scene when the admiral renounces his idol—when de Fromanoir silently turns the portrait of the traitorous marshal hanging before him face to the wall.

Their aristocratic origin does not prevent the vice-admiral's children, a naval officer and a young girl, a nurse, from joining up immediately with the real defenders of their country, the sailors and workers, and the soldiers of the routed armies. Here also the author finds his most outstanding heroes and heroines of great and gallant deeds, who give their lives for the name of France, so dear to them.

"It's not a matter of a Shakespearean subject," said Anatole France, "the accident columns of the newspapers are full of them; it's a matter of how and by whom the subject is treated."

Jean-Richard Bloch has penetrated deeply into the psychology of each of his characters, and with brilliancy of language drawn a picture of his country in our times. His knowledge of theatrical technique has assisted the writer to satisfy one of the main demands of the French dramatic school: quick action. This makes it possible to forgive a certain abuse of the thunder of guns, the roar of engines and other sound effects which the military subject demands.

This is something for the producer to deal with.

The main person accused, Marshal Pétain, does not appear on the stage, but the Vichy government's treacherous policy is exposed throughout the three acts.

The speechless role of the police inspector working in the Franco-German secret service is well thought out. This is one of the many "average Frenchmen," splendid soldiers in the war of 1914—1918, who were deceived by Pétain's treacherous policy, and realized the truth when it was too late. It is only at the very end of the play that he helps the patriots to settle accounts with his own Gestapo associates, and then commits suicide.

One particularly interesting character is the German Admiral Von Sass, commander of the naval arm of the German occupation troops. Von Sass is an officer of the old German school, able to command, to work out strategic plans out and dried to the last detail. However, these plans always come to grief owing to an underestimation of the moral strength of those whom the Germans have considered beaten even before the fighting started.

Equally well drawn are the characters of the French Admirals Lefèvre and Bazir, creatures of the Vichy government. They arouse the deepest loathing by their contempt for the people, their willingness to trample on the interests of their country for the sake of their personal, mercenary interests.

The play shows the activities of the Gestapo, which sent picked brigades to France. Desiring to show the whole subtlety of this organization's work, the author puts at the head of one of these Gestapo brigades a "charming person," Alice Giddins, born in Charlottenburg, who pretends to be a poor French teacher from the German-occupied central northern districts, whose husband had been killed by the Germans. She leads a brigade of lovely girls to suit all tastes—from the sailor to the admiral. The development of the romance between Alice and the son of de Fromanoir is filled with tragedy; learning what she is, de Fromanoir himself shoots the woman whom he has loved.

Into this conflict of political and personal passions the author has found it necessary to introduce two German soldiers Siegfried and Siegmund, at first glance having no direct connection with the action of the play. More, these types appear at the beginning of each of the three acts. In Act I, they merely engage in vulgar talk about gay Paris life, in Act II

they appear as speculators in coal and petrol stolen from the army store houses, and in Act III they are considering a lucrative deal in "living wares" that have fallen into their hands.

Why does the author need such grotesques? One might have thought that such a serious play could have done without introductory tragi-comic scenes.

To this Jean-Richard Bloch supplies a direct and deeply considered answer, when he gives these revolting white-lashed monstrosities the names of noble and pure-spirited heroes of the German epic. In these "comic" scenes with Siegfried and Siegmund, the author, like an eloquent council for the prosecution, mercilessly presses home the charge against Hitler. He exposes one of the foulest crimes committed against the German people, when, for the purpose of inculcating in them ferocious instincts based on contempt for other nations, of hammering its criminal race theory into the heads of modern Germans, fascism used the characters of their national epic, characters sacred to every people. The story of the heroic exploits of Siegfried and Siegmund, who freed the lovely Brunhilde from the powers of darkness, should inspire Germans to the struggle against evil. And the loftier the ideal, the fouler the crime of its distortion. "Gaze upon my Siegfried and Siegmund," the author seems to say, "and you will measure the depth of the degradation to which the German people have been brought by their notorious Führer."

In the clearness of its analysis of historical events, and the dramatic intensity of the conflicts depicted, Bloch's play ranks with the best works of art consciously serving the lofty aims of the struggle.

Jean-Richard Bloch suffers deeply on behalf of his country. Not only that, but he has left there, let us confidently hope only for the time being, all that is dearest to him—his children.

It must not be forgotten that long before the war this deep thinker and great master of the printed word had found those ideals, that faith which gives him the strength and courage to endure any trials.

We are glad that Jean-Richard Bloch, our friend and guest, has been able to witness the approaching victory and the dawn of the liberation of France.

Bloch's work shows that the best French artists, devoted patriots, will make valuable contributions to the resurrection of their fair country to a new and better life.

Lieutenant-General A. IGNATYEV

NEW BOOKS

Rising France, a booklet by Leo Volynsky, issued by the State Publishing House in Moscow, sums up the history of the French people's struggle against the hitlerite invaders.

One chapter contains the biography of General Charles de Gaulle. The chapter *Flames of Toulon* describes the exploit of the gallant French sailors.

The author also dwells in detail on the shameful story of "collaboration" between the French capitulators and the hitlerite occupation authorities.

Exposure of the treacherous methods of fascist espionage is the object of a booklet, *Hitlerite Espionage*, by M. Nikitinsky, published in Moscow.

The author cites a wealth of facts to show that, on Hitler's direct orders, Germans in foreign countries—from the diplomatic corps to trading companies (to say nothing of German fascist organizations abroad)—were expected to engage in espionage.

This "diplomatic" espionage activity acquired especially vast dimensions in the Latin-

American countries before their break (with the exception of the Argentine) with the Axis. In Bolivia for instance the German legation had a staff of sixty five. The director of the Argentinian branch of "Siemens and Schuckert" was a spy plotting a fascist coup in the Argentine.

In conclusion the author gives facts relating to the struggle against hitlerite espionage on Soviet territory during the National War.

A collection of documents on the history of the Seven Years' War (1756—1763), compiled from material in the state archives, has been published in Moscow under the title *Defeat of Prussia by the Russian Army*. The introduction is by Professor Korobkov.

These documents are of special interest today.

It is known that Friedrich II did not hesitate to embark upon a big war against several states at once. He underestimated the strength of his adversaries and most important of all, failed to take into account the generally recognized merits of the Russian soldier. The Russian army inflicted heavy defeat upon the Prussian troops, sent them reeling back and captured Berlin, capital of the state considered at that time the most powerful monarchy from a military standpoint.

We turn the pages of the volume, written in tense and at the same time expressive language of war communiqués: they reproduce episodes of the battles which left a lasting impression on history. The Prussian documents reveal the difficult position in which the Prussian government and Friedrich II found themselves as a result of the victories of the Russian army.

The documents reflect the aggressive role of Prussia in that war, the cruelty of the Prussian army; they also show that having occupied Berlin, the Russian army acted as the champion of order, suppressing the predatory instincts of the Austrians and Saxons.

The facsimile of very important documents are reproduced, in particular that of the text of the surrender of Berlin in the German language, signed by the city-hall authorities.

Heroic Cities, a Leningrad publication, contains striking and stirring episodes portraying the fortitude and courage of Leningraders, of seamen of the Black Sea Fleet who defended Odessa and Sevastopol and of the defenders of Stalingrad. Considerable space is devoted to the history of the 62nd Army which defended Stalingrad.

Michael Shchepkin, a new book by Professor S. Durylin ("Young Guards" Publishing House), written in popular form, gives a truthful story of the life and artistic activities of the famous Russian actor Shchepkin (1788—1863), progressive public figure of his time, reformer of histrionic art and founder of the

Russian realistic theatre. Of special interest are the chapters relating to Shchepkin's friendship with Gogol, Belinsky and Herzen.

Sons of Old Kruse ("Soviet Writer" Publishing House) is a collection of works of four writers from Soviet Latvia. They are short stories (rather short novels) about contemporary Latvia conquered but not subdued by the enemy. V. Lacis' story (the title of which is adopted as the title of the volume) acquaints the reader with the gallant struggle of antifascist underground organizations.

Arvius Sharpens His Axe by I. Lemanis, is a truthful and simple story of how people's vengeance is born: the hero, a Latvian farm labourer Arvius whose wife had been tortured to death by the Germans, joins the ranks of the people's avengers.

Especially noteworthy is the masterfully written story by Anna Sakse *The Peaceful Inhabitant* which contains a convincing picture of the mentality of a coward and egotist who dreams of staying "aside" from the struggle and ends with outright betrayal.

In the literary life of the Soviet Union this small volume is an important event representing as it does the endeavours of Latvian writers today when their people are engaged in a hard struggle against Latvia's inveterate enemy.

Through the Smoke of Fires, a novel in two parts by V. Yazvitsky issued by the State Literary Publishing House, is an interesting attempt to reproduce some scenes from the history of Western Europe.

Part I is devoted to Spain; Part II, as well as the concluding events, is set in France.

A young Spanish physician, Fernando de Alvarez, engaged in the study of blood circulation, is fighting against the inquisition and the Jesuites. Both Fernando and his friend Diego perish in the struggle. But a third hero, armourer Jose Garcia, survives and continues the fight against the black forces of reaction.

Through the Smoke of Fires is written in the form of a travel story so popular in Spain. The description of his heroes' flight from Spain to France enables the author to paint a big canvas with many personages and to give striking details from life and history.

The skill with which the plot is unravelled and the characters depicted and, lastly, the rich vivid language make Yazvitsky's novel very interesting reading.

Thus Shall It Be, a small volume of verse by Yuri Verkhovskiy, published in Sverdlovsk, is the lyrical deliberation of an old poet who loves Russian poetry and Russian culture. The wrath of a patriot, deeply offended by the Germans, implacable hatred of the barbarous invaders, the vision of cities and districts of his native land dear to him and temporarily overrun by the enemy, fill the lines of this poetic diary.

UZBEK HAMLET AND OTHELLO

The production of *Hamlet* and *Othello* on the stage of the Uzbek Hamza Theatre was an important event in the artistic life of Uzbekistan. In *Hamlet* and particularly in *Othello* the unusual talent of the Uzbek People's Artist Abrar Khidoyatov was fully revealed.

Abrar Khidoyatov is a true son of the people. His father was a bricklayer and plasterer in Tashkent. Every evening after work he would go to the *chaikhana* and, squatting crosslegged with his cronies on the large Tekin rug beside the huge tea turn, would match his wits with those of his friends in the favourite Uzbek pastime called "Askia" in which the jovial bricklayer had no rival. Khidoyatov père was a past-master at the art of repartee. His fund of puns, witticisms and *bons-mots* seemed inexhaustible and the laughter and applause of the other habitués of the *chaikhana* stimulated his wit. His delighted listeners gave him the seat of honour and pressed food and drink upon him.

When his dark-eyed, clever little son Abrar reached his ninth birthday he said to his father:

"I want to study!"

His father smiled.

"So you should, my boy. But for that it is necessary either for me to come into a fortune or for the tutor to teach you free of charge."

Both alternatives were equally hopeless. But Abrar found a way. He went to work for a wealthy man named Hoja-Khan. He washed floors, tended cattle and did all the other odd jobs that were found for him. The two rubles he received monthly for his work went to his tutor. Abrar subsequently worked for other masters toiling hard for a miserable pittance.

In 1918 the first Uzbek theatre "Turan" began to function in the old section of Tashkent. These were the first timid steps taken in the direction of dramatic art by the Uzbek people who till then knew little more than repartee contests, market shows, clowns, tight-rope walkers and puppets.

One day something happened which determined the entire future course of the young man's life. The "Turan" theatre which was staging the play *Zakhak and Maran* found itself short of actors for some of the mass scene minor parts and called upon the members of the dramatic circle at the teaching course where Abrar happened to be studying.

Abrar was among the pupils chosen for minor parts in the play. It was for the first time that Abrar appeared before the footlights of a real theatre. They gave him a thin booklet of six pages—his first role. He acquitted himself so well that Uygur, the regisseur, now People's



A scene from "Othello" at the Hamza Theatre

Artist of the Republic, praised him and invited him to remain in the company.

The son of the old bricklayer had found himself at last.

The subsequent career of Abrar Khidoyatov is linked with the Uzbek State Dramatic Theatre. During the Civil War he was both actor and Red Army man. In 1919 he was sent by the Head-Staff of the Turkestan front with a group of actors to Ferghana, which was then the scene of furious battles, to perform for the Red Army units and partisan detachments. Many a time he had to take part in skirmishes with the *basmachi*¹.

On one occasion the troupe was giving a performance of a war play in Skobelev (now Ferghana), full of shooting and shouts of "Hurrah." The copse round the fortress served as stage and auditorium. The artists rode real horses. The sound operator shot from real guns "behind the scenes." The fortress was left without a strong guard. At this moment a band of *basmachi*, headed by Madamin-bek, violated the truce that existed at the time and crept into the copse. The audience immediately noticed that the shooting "behind the scenes" had violently increased. The cry of "*basmachi!*" went up and all the men in the audience rushed outside to give battle. The actors too went to help defend Ferghana against the traitors.

Abrar, who happened to be wearing the costume of a rich bey, complete with turban and flowing beard, ran out with the others. In one of the backyards he saw a fierce-looking *basmach* accost two women demanding that they hand over their possessions. The women shrank back in terror and sighting Abrar ran to him for protection. The *basmach*, completely taken in by the actor's get-up, mistook him for a wealthy man and hence a *basmach* supporter.

"Good father!" he said relieved. "Have you seen any Reds in this neighbourhood?"

The actor in Abrar could not resist such an opportunity for a histrionic gesture. Flinging open his robe which revealed his Red Army uniform, he cried:

"One stands before you, dog!"

The *basmach* raised his sabre but Abrar's finger was quick on the trigger.

When the Civil War ended Abrar's thoughts reverted to study. He longed to meet the masters of Russian theatrical art.

In 1924 the young actor's dream came true: he was enrolled in the Uzbek Dramatic Studio in Moscow. For three years Abrar studied in the capital. Producers, regisseurs and actors of the best Moscow theatres helped the bricklayer's son to master the technique of stagecraft. He proved an able pupil. When he returned to his native Tashkent he played leading roles in a number of new Uzbek plays as well as in world classics, such as Gogol's *Inspector-General*, Gozzi's *Princess Turandot*.

His career as an actor had begun.

In 1935 an important event happened in the life of Khidoyatov: his first Shakespearean role. *Hamlet* was to be staged by the Hamza Theatre of Drama in Tashkent on the occasion

of the theatre's 15th anniversary and Khidoyatov was to be cast in the title role.

He threw himself into the study of this role with all the fire of his passionate temperament. For hours he would roam up and down the little street outside his house trying to catch the subtleties of the part.

Finally exhausted he would drop onto a bench:

Now I am alone!

His head would drop onto his hands as he repeated:

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,

Could force his soul so to his own conceits

That from her working all his visage wann'd. . .

For nights at a time Abrar would sit in a corner of the sofa on the deserted stage. In the morning the stage hands would find him asleep with the book in his hands.

Abrar worked a great deal together with his wife Sara Ishanturayeva, a member of the same company, who played Ophelia and later Desdemona.

The role of Hamlet did not come easily to the actor. But in the course of his work on it his art developed and matured.

The result of Abrar's painstaking work on his first Shakespearean role was a powerful and inspired Hamlet that won him recognition at once as an actor with a future. When the Hamza Theatre demonstrated its production of *Hamlet* in Moscow, critics of the capital pronounced it a definite step forward in the development of Uzbek drama.

Othello was Abrar's fifty-second role. In it the vivid temperament of the actor was combined with a fine and polished mastery.

"Oh! Villainy hath made mocks with love!"

This phrase of Shakespeare's would be a fitting epigraph to the production whose success was due in no small measure to the excellent translation into the Uzbek language made by Gafur Gulyam.

On the eve of the première Khidoyatov gave an interview to the local Tashkent newspaper expressing his own views on the interpretation of the role.

"The key to Othello's nature," he wrote among other things, "is, in my opinion, to be found in his words: 'Tis not to make me jealous to say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company, is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well; where virtue is, these are more virtuous'; and further: 'I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove; and on the proof, there is no more but this,—away at once with love or jealousy. . .'"

"Abused confidence, dishonour caused an anguish that could be appeased by death alone.

"Richard Burbage, friend of Shakespeare and the first actor of his plays, presented Othello as the 'saddened Moor.'"

"It is as such that I have tried to depict Othello."

And this is precisely how Abrar Khidoyatov played the part.

Two figures are silhouetted clearly against the dark-blue background of the night sky. One wears a doublet and leathern hose and a

¹ Basmach—a counter-revolutionary bandit in the Soviet Central Asia.—Ed.

that with a feather, the other is garbed in a flowing robe and turban. Slowly they descend the staircase. Othello has the calm, confident bearing of the successful soldier. There is nothing about him to hint at the storm of emotion that is to burst forth so soon. His glance comes to rest on the house where Desdemona dwells. What tenderness, gratitude and love are conveyed in that glance! The whole of his conversation with Iago seems to be addressed to his beloved whose invisible presence he feels.

Later on in the same scene Cassio's words to the effect that the Duke had "sent a dozen sequent messengers" bring a faint smile to Othello's lips. The news does not trouble him. He seems to be reflecting:

"I was right, then, when I said of Brabantio: 'Let him do his spite: my services which I have done the signory shall out-tongue his complaints. . .'"

There is a great hidden power in the voice of Abrar's Othello when, with a single gesture, a single glance, a single word he averts a clash of arms between Brabantio's servants and his own followers:

"Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them. . ."

For the first time the spectator is aware of the majesty of this Moor.

Othello's speech before the senate is most impressive. The personal charm of Khidoyatov is strongly felt here.

Othello tells the story of his love for Desdemona movingly as though reliving the joy of those happy hours. The end of the speech has a triumphant, strong and manly ring.

When Desdemona, speaking of her "dual duty," gives preference to her husband, Othello cannot hide his triumph. The smile of the conqueror lights up his dark face. Abrar's expression is so real and natural that one is wholly convinced of the simplicity and sincerity of the Moor's nature: not only does he love, he is simple, trusting, naive, even.

Only at the end of the second act does the violent side of Othello's nature reveal itself in Abrar's interpretation.

The ring of the tocsin announces a skirmish in the castle. Enter Othello. His first words ("What is the matter here?") may be interpreted as a calm question. But Abrar's Othello is in a passion before he enters the room and sees the fight between Cassio and Montaigno. The very tocsin has disturbed the calm pervading his soul. Abrar enters with a quick, tense step threatening dire punishment to those responsible for the disturbance:

. . . put by this barbarous brawl;

*He that stirs next to carve for his own rage
Holds his soul light; he dies upon his motion.
Silence that dreadful bell. . .*

A new aspect of Othello's character is revealed: his capacity for blind rage. In this way Abrar explains how Othello's benevolence toward Cassio could have changed so abruptly.

The third act is undoubtedly the most difficult for the actor. In it Othello is drawn into a cunning web of calumny and deception when the conflict between doubt and faith begins. Yet this act is a genuine triumph for Abrar Khidoyatov.

Iago's seemingly innocent query as to whether Cassio was aware of his passion for Desdemona when he wooed her, evoked a

gesture of impatience from Othello. The talk jars upon the Moor's train of thought. True Othello at once tries to throw off his annoyance by speaking in a jesting tone and only becomes serious after hints have been given.

But his hands betray his hidden agitation: they seek relief in movement. Once or twice Abrar taps his knee. Still confident he says: "Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy."

But little by little Iago inspires an insane jealousy in Othello.

Abrar's Othello folds his arms and gives himself up to gloomy thoughts. He rises, still lost in thought and stands for a while motionless, then paces across the stage with his eyes still on Iago. A fleeting smile passes over his features for an instant: Abrar-Othello cannot believe in the possibility of betrayal. But this is the last glimmer of reason that is no longer able to overcome the paroxysm of jealousy that is taking possession of him.

The seed planted by Iago grows.

Othello is in torment.

His words: "I am black!" as he glances at his hands is spoken in a tone of humility as though a confession of guilt.

He searches in his mind for anything that might have given rise to betrayal. Standing with his back to the audience, engrossed in his tormenting thoughts he soliloquizes. Bitter lamenting changes suddenly to mad fury: Othello strides to and fro, his whole being seething with pain and rage. His head trembles, his breath comes in gasps. But this profound suffering makes him conscious of his strength and a resolution is born. It is not a cry, but a roar that escapes from his breast:

"Now do I see 'tis true."

Like a vow sound the words: "Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!"

Under the weight of the resolution he has taken Othello drops his head upon the cushions of the sofa.

In his conversation with Desdemona, Abrar's Othello betrays a new quality: that of the insulted and "sorrowful" Moor, crushed and broken by the believed faithlessness of his wife. In the handkerchief dialogue Abrar seems to be searching painfully for a denial of all Iago's terrible accusations: at the same time he tries to catch the woman who has deceived him, to press her to the wall with his questions, the reply to which he has ready.

Iago's cynical play of words wounds Othello to the quick and lifted once again onto the crest of a wave of anger he falls senseless.

When at the première performance Khidoyatov fell at this point, his arm twisted beneath him, someone in the audience leapt up from his seat and ran toward the stage. It was the theatre's physician, who believed that the actor had succumbed to the emotional strain.

Abrar acts the finale of the tragedy as though the greatness of his suffering, the destruction of faith in his beloved has shattered him completely: his eye is dimmed, his movements are slow and apathetic, his voice hoarse. He feels the approach of his end.

One leaves the theatre profoundly shaken by the tragedy of Othello and carried away by the powerful and original interpretation given to this immortal Shakespearean play by People's Artist of Uzbekistan, Abrar Khidoyatov.

YURI ARBAT

"TWO BUDDIES"

Last year the attention of Soviet readers was attracted by Leo Slavin's novel *My Townsmen*, a story of Soviet soldiers, defenders of the City of Lenin. The author is primarily interested in people and their characters.

E. Gabrilovich wrote a scenario based on this novel. The producers of the film *Two Buddies* (director L. Lukov, cameraman A. Ginzburg) reproduced on the screen not only the events depicted in L. Slavin's novel, but also the lyricism which had captivated the reader.

The principal heroes are two young Russian workers: Arkadi Dzyubin, a native of Odessa, and Sasha Svintsov who hails from the Urals. Their friendship is of a kind that is struck up at the front. Different in temperament and habits, they are the same as regards hatred of the enemy, noble patriotic courage, traditional, brotherly care of the Russian soldier for his comrade-in-arms.

Brought up in a bustling seaport city, Arkadi is shown in the film as the "life and soul of the party," a witty and fiery-headed fellow who never despairs in any situation. Wiry and muscular, with a shrewd resolute face, sly merry eyes, alert of movement and quick of mind, Arkadi Dzyubin is graphically and faithfully portrayed by the actor Bernes.

Two of his new songs—the funny song about Kostya and the sad one, *Dark Night*, the latter in particular, quickly won their way to the heart and memory of the spectator.

Sasha Svintsov is the direct opposite of Arkadi. He is good-natured, phlegmatic, shy and reticent. The actor Andreyev has given a charming character study of "Sasha of the Urals," as Arkadi calls him.

The friendship of the two soldiers is not the usual friendship between two people of the

same standard of education and similar characters. It is a peculiar friendship: the scoffer cannot offer the friendship that lyricist does. In everything, even in the most dreadful circumstances Arkadi can always find something funny, something that can give rise to a jest. After a heated battle the Red Army men are relaxing in their dugout, while the incorrigible Dzyubin, amid a group of soldiers, continues poking fun at Sasha, giving them the latest battle joke about him. Sasha is by no means offended: he knows Dzyubin's nature and lets him amuse the men.

In a number of scenes the spectator witnesses the daring and initiative of the two buddies and of their comrades-in-arms. Neither the enemy's skilful manoeuvre with a tankborne detachment of sub-machine-guns, nor a psychic attack are able to break their fighting spirit.

A characteristic feature of all the pictures directed by Lukov is primarily the intimate warmth with which he unfolds human nature and the portrayal of the fate of his heroes. And in *Two Buddies* the most interesting feature is the characters of the two friends: Arkadi and Sasha. The director and actors succeeded in lending the theme of soldiers' friendship a fresh and touching expression.

His comrade is in danger. At the risk of his life Sasha saves his friend. Dzyubin in turn risks his life to get a flask of water for his wounded friend. The trials of war strengthen their friendship—this is convincingly brought out in the film.

But their friendship was destined to be subjected to a different test, no less intricate and trying than the test of battle. . . In the besieged city Sasha meets a girl, Tassya, and falls



76 A still from the film "Two Buddies." Sasha, wounded, as played by B. the medical sister played by Y. Zhimov

in love with all the depth of his emotional nature. It is a secret, shy and strong love, a love that shrinks from a rudely said word, to say nothing of mockery. . . . The two buddies arrive in Leningrad and go to visit Tassya. Quick to divine his friend's feelings, Arkadi tries his best to help him. These scenes abound both in ridiculous and touching elements: during, an alert, when the reticent Sasha prefers solitude, Arkadi tells Tassya endless petty absurdities about the wonderful character of "Sasha of the Urals" who loves her. En route to the front-line, riding on the roof of a tram car on a dark rainy night, Sasha discloses to Dzyubin his love for the girl left behind in the city. In this scene the actor B. Andreyev succeeded in bringing out the full nobility of Svintsov's pure love, the touching trustfulness of his wholehearted character.

All the keener is the impression from the subsequent scene when the friends quarrel. Action is shifted to a dugout just after a battle when the wounded are moaning and the healthy ones lapse into grim silence. To amuse his comrades, Arkadi, after singing a funny Odessa song, recounts in a mocking vein the story of Sasha's love. . . . The test is too hard. For the first time the friends quarrel in earnest. Sasha leaves Dzyubin's machine-gun crew and it would seem that nothing could restore their friendship.

But in another battle the men are again test-

ed by the suffering and blood of war. Sasha is wounded and goes to a hospital. To atone for his sin, Arkadi writes a letter to Tassya on behalf of his friend to strengthen her attachment to him. The latter learns of it on his way from the city back to his unit when he meets the girl in the street. This restores his confidence in Arkadi and the concluding scene of the film when the two meet in the battle field and Sasha saves his friend once again is stirring and forceful. Sasha carries the wounded Dzyubin to safety. They see the retreating Germans, see the Red Army men routing the enemy and, even when on the verge of losing consciousness, Arkadi cannot refrain from a last thrust: "These vermin won't live to see Arkadi Dzyubin die."

By the end of the film the spectator falls in love with both friends—Sasha and Arkadi, with both of these gallant and noble comrades-in-arms.

The least successful are the Leningrad scenes. Tassya as performed by V. Shershneva is a bit monotonous. But on the whole the film *Two Buddies* is a big success. The warm feelings of its characters and the high level of the production make it stirring. It is unquestionably a significant event in the art of cinematography and is a credit not only to the producers and actors, but also to the cameraman, the artist V. Kaplunovsky and the composer I. Bogoslovsky who put no little ingenuity and temperament into their work.

DMITRI YERYOMIN

YOUNG CAMERAMEN AT THE FRONT

It is somehow taken for granted that scientific degrees are contested in the severe-looking auditoriums of universities, in a solemn atmosphere of academic surroundings. . . . Four young Soviet cameramen—alumni of the U.S.S.R. Institute of Cinematography—submitted their dissertation for a scientific degree at the front, in the very thick of battle, amidst the roar of gunfire, the clatter of tanks and the burst of shells. Eighteen months ago four young students who had not yet taken their degree as cameramen, left the city of Alma-Ata, where the Institute of Cinematography was at the time temporarily situated, and went to the front for their period of diploma practice.

For a long time one of these diploma students—V. Muromtsev—had no opportunity to film battle scenes, that is, not until he left for the partisans in action behind the enemy lines. Later on a number of his shots were included in the films *People's Avengers* (about the Byelorussian partisans) and *The Battle for the Soviet Ukraine*.

The forceful film-shots sent by the student I. Arons from the vicinity of Novorossiisk, Tuapse and Rostov frequently appeared in the current newsreels of "Soyuzkinozhurnal." He

was particularly successful with his series of shots showing sniper Mikhail Surkov, who has accounted for seven hundred Germans.

The other two students—J. Monglovsky and I. Gutman—were posted with one of the best front-line filming groups, where they passed through an excellent practical schooling under the supervision of R. Gikov, an experienced producer and cameraman. These young diploma students took most active part in the making of that outstanding documental film *The Battle of Orel*. The theses they submitted for their degrees included such shots as air battles, fighting in the dense woods, tank engagements and episodes: the capture of a "tongue," a marine landing party, cavalry charge, etc., all of which have been added to the film-annals of the war as skilful and valuable contributions.

The idea of submitting their diploma theses for the degree of cameraman at the front was first suggested by one of the oldest Soviet cameramen, Edward Tisse. He began his own career as a cinema operator at the front during the Civil War—an excellent school which armed him for the filming of the well-known film *Potemkin*.

S. B.

NEWS AND VIEWS

THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

Forty-five years ago the curtain of the Moscow Art Theatre went up for the first time. Throughout its almost half century of activity the creative aspects of this Theatre can be defined in the words of Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko who, with Constantine Stanislavsky, was the joint founder of the Art Theatre. "From the first our Theatre has only acknowledged art which was permeated with great thoughts. . . . It aims to convey these thoughts to the audience through the medium of perfected artistic forms, bringing the audience direct and radiant joy."

On its anniversary the Art Theatre gave a performance of A. C. Tolstoy's *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* which was staged in the first days of its existence forty-five years ago. A particularly festive atmosphere reigned that evening in the foyer, the hall, on the stage and backstage. All the Theatre's friends and well-wishers flocked to see this jubilee performance: eminent actors, writers, artists, musicians, scientists and officers and generals of the Red Army. At the suggestion of the Theatre's Art Director Nikolai Khmelyov, the audience rose to its feet in memory of the Theatre's founders.

As on that first night forty-five years ago, the title role was played by Ivan Moskvina, whose appearance was loudly applauded. In the interval between acts III and IV, congratulations and good wishes were offered to all those who have been with the Art Theatre since its foundation: actors and actresses, make-up artists, the chief of the Theatre's electric-lighting department, one of the costume makers, one of the ushers and a cloakroom attendant. The performance was a tremendous success. It did not impress one as a sort of old-fashioned piece from the old-time theatre but as a vital and throbbing work of art. This was the 790th performance of *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich* on the stage of the Moscow Art Theatre.

During the "forty-five years of its existence the Art Theatre has staged more than 18,000 performances—15,000 in Moscow and 3,000 in the principal towns of the U.S.S.R., Europe and America. 113 productions have been staged in these forty-five years: 76 from the Russian classics and the works of Soviet writers, 37 from world classics and the best of contemporary West-European dramas.

N. LOBACHEVSKY, THE GREAT RUSSIAN MATHEMATICIAN (1793—1856)

The 150th anniversary of the birth of the eminent Russian scientist and outstanding mathematician N. Lobachevsky was recently held. Lobachevsky introduced much that was new in the world of learning. Already in boyhood he displayed a richly gifted nature. The son of a modest country-land surveyor, he first attend-



ed school at the age of nine. By the time he was thirteen and a half he was already a student at the Kazan University where he gained prominence by his successes in the field of mathematics. Lobachevsky was barely eighteen when he graduated the University and received his M.A. Three years later he was given the post of adjunct and this young man of twenty-one thus launched on his pedagogical career. In 1827 he was appointed rector of the Kazan University—that same University to which he had matriculated as a thirteen-year-old boy.

His works and discoveries, which constituted landmarks in the progress of science, were concurrent with Lobachevsky's considerable activities as a public figure and educator; he occupied the post of rector for about twenty years. Towards the close of his life he lost his eyesight and, blind though he was, he dictated his *Paragometry* in which he gave a comprehensive explanation of the geometrical system he had discovered. Lobachevsky died in 1856 at the age of sixty-three.

In his article dedicated to the 150th anniversary of Lobachevsky's birth, the Soviet scientist, Academician A. Kolmogorov writes:

"Lobachevsky's chief merit is the 'non-Euclidean geometry' he created and which is now often termed by scientists the 'Lobachevsky geometry.'"

"The acceptance of the newly discovered principles of his geometry," writes Prof.

N. Glagolev in his article on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Lobachevsky's birth, "necessitated a fundamental change in his philosophic ideas on space. And Lobachevsky boldly trod this path."

His innovations seemed overbold and contemporaries met this "Copernicus of geometry" with "bayonets a-bristle." The full significance of Lobachevsky's works became evident only in the light of the latest physical and mathematical theories of the twentieth century.

Universities and teachers' institutes on the U.S.S.R. held memorial sessions dedicated to his anniversary. Papers were read on the works of this great Russian mathematician at the Scientific Council of the Moscow State University. Professors, teachers and students of the Moscow Teachers' Institute dedicated a symposium to the memory of Lobachevsky describing his work as that of an outstanding pedagogic of his time.

The Lobachevsky Prize, periodically awarded in Kazan, is considered a mark of high distinction among leading geometricians the world over. It has been awarded to the author of the theory of constant group, Sophus Lie, to the eminent mathematician David Hilbert and to the founder of the general conceptions of modern differential geometry Elie Cartan.

NEW WORKS BY SOVIET COMPOSERS

Ivan Dzerzhinsky, composer of the opera *And Quiet Flows the Don*, has written a new opera entitled *Nadezhda Svetlova*. The two principal characters are Nadezhda Svetlova and Ivan Likhachov, Leningrad students.

The opera is being staged by the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre in Moscow.

Maryan Koval, composer of the opera *Yemel'yan Pugachov* awarded a 1943 Stalin Prize, has finished a new cycle of songs: *Urals—the Mighty Knight*.

"This subject was not chosen by mere chance," the composer declares. "As early as 1931, having visited the construction site of Magnitogorsk, I hit upon the idea of a series of works to be dedicated to the Urals."

Koval spent the first eighteen months of the war in the Urals—"the Soviet arsenal"—and it was then that he started on his cycle of songs about *Urals—the Mighty Knight*. The words to these songs have been written by the poet V. Kamensky. *Urals—the Mighty Knight* is being issued by the State Music Publishers.

THE OLDEST GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

The Leningrad Geographical Society of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. is one of the oldest institutions of its kind in the world. Throughout its history it has been associated with equipping famous Russian expeditions to the Arctic, Central Asia and the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

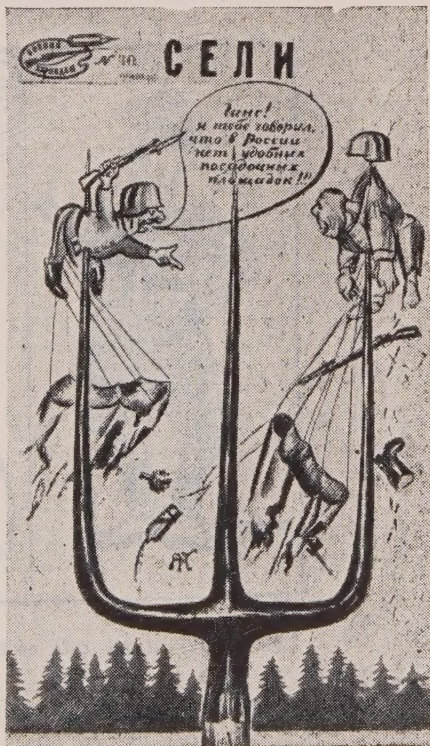
During the present war the Leningrad geographers regularly give lectures to various Red Army units, on board the ships of the Baltic Fleet, and at Leningrad factories and plants where they also read reports on the expeditions of Russian travellers and navigators.

Despite the difficult and involved conditions in Leningrad the personnel of the Geographical Society succeeded in fully preserving the library, numbering tens of thousands of books on geography, including a large number of rare books, maps and atlases. This geographical library is one of the best in the world. The Society's archives containing manuscripts, diaries and the maps of Russian travellers is likewise intact. Among the most interesting diaries are those written by the Russian traveller Miklukha-Maklai, who explored New Guinea.

The Society's president, L. Berg, has prepared a new, supplemented edition during the war about the expeditions of the famous navigator, Captain-Commodore Vitus Behring, and his assistant, Captain Alexei Chirikov.

"BATTLING PENCIL"

Ever since the first days of the war a group of artists who joined forces and published their works under the title of "Battling Pencil" have won great popularity among Leningraders and among the fighters on the Leningrad front. "Battling Pencils" appear periodically, in the form of leaflet-posters depicting the gallant deeds of individual fighters, the valiant struggle of the partisans, the part youth are playing in the war, the work of young women who have enlisted as volunteer nurses, military



"Landing"

"Hans! I told you there were no good landing places in Russia!!"

A poster by V. Kurdov

training of the population, work in the rear, the patriotism of Leningraders, etc. Many of these posters deal with other subjects, condemning the pillage and rapine practiced by the nazis.

An exhibition of "Battling Pencil" leaflet-posters—eighty works in all—has been arranged at the Lenin Library in Moscow.

DISCOVERY OF BOOKS FROM ALEXANDER SUVOROV'S LIBRARY

A number of books that had belonged to the great Russian military leader Alexander Suvorov were recently discovered in an old barn in the village of Kamenka, Leningrad Region. It has been ascertained that these books had been brought to Kamenka from the Suvorov family estate in 1900 (on the eve of the centenary of Suvorov's death). The books are well preserved. Some of the volumes bear notes made personally by Suvorov and his grandson. The latter once owned an estate in Kamenka. Besides Russian, there are also books in English, French, Italian and Latin. Among them is a manuscript by Theobald Beltreme, a Cavalier of the Maltese Order: *A Diary of Travel Through Malta*, dated 1757.

This precious find has been handed over in

its entirety to the Artillery History Museum of the Red Army, where a large collection of Suvorov relics are preserved.

IN THE STATE LITERARY ARCHIVES

Not long before the war a Central State Literary Archives was set up. Here were gathered over 600,000 manuscripts, autographs and letters of eminent figures in Russian and West-European literature, stage art, music, etc. This collection includes manuscripts of Pushkin, Lermontov, Leo Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gorky and rare autographs of Voltaire, Diderot and Victor Hugo.

The Literary Archives recently acquired more than 370 valuable new documents, including a portrait of Chekhov bearing his signature, a letter dated 1905 penned by Maxim Gorky, unpublished letters of the writer V. Korolenko, the composer S. Rachmaninov, C. Stanislavsky, the notes written by the Italian patriot and revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi, letters of Bernard Shaw, etc. In one of the albums recently acquired by the Archives were discovered unknown manuscripts and letters of the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, relating to 1826 and 1831.

DOUBLING

In order to raise the spirits of the hitlerite army, a special post, "military humorist," has been created.

(From newspapers)



The Führer in his role of military humorist-in-chief
Drawn by Boris Yefimov

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